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Heritage in the Clouds

Englishness in the Dolomites

William Bainbridge

Hatfield College – Durham University



Submitted for the Degree of Ph.D. in the Department of Geography

April 2014

Supervisors: Prof Mike Crang & Dr Divya Tolia-Kelly

Department of Geography
Science Laboratories
South Road
Durham DH1 3LE, UK

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Abstract

Guided by the romantic compass of Byron, Ruskin and Turner, Victorian travellers to the Dolomites sketched through their wanderings in the mountainous backdrop of Venice a cultural 'Petit Tour' of global significance. As they zigzagged across a debatable land consumed by competing frontiers, Victorians discovered a unique geography characterized by untrodden peaks and unfrequented valleys. This landscape blended aesthetic, scientific and cultural values utterly different from those engendered by the bombastic conquests of the Western Alps achieved during the 'Golden Age of Mountaineering'. Filtered through the cultivated lens of the Venetian Grand Tour, their encounter with the Dolomites is marked by a series of distinct cultural practices that paradigmatically define what I call the 'Silver Age of Mountaineering'. These cultural practices, magnetized by symbols of Englishness, reveal a range of geographic concerns that are more ethnographic than imperialistic, more feminine than masculine, more artistic than sportive – rather than racing to summits, the Silver Age is about rambling, rather than conquering peaks, it is about sketching them in fully articulated interaction with the Dolomite landscape. Through these practices, the Dolomite Mountains came to be known in England as 'Titian Country', spurring among Victorian travellers the sentimental drive to ramble in the backgrounds of Titian's paintings. Freed from their historical conditions and rehashed in different discursive patterns, these symbols of Englishness re-emerge through a history collapsed through geography: a heritage that is subtly, if controversially, exploited today in the wake of the recent inscription of the Dolomites onto the UNESCO World Heritage List.



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INTRODUCTION

Tools for Unravelling Heritage

Too much is now asked of heritage. In the same breath we commend national patrimony, regional and ethnic legacies, and a global heritage shared and sheltered in common. We forget that these aims are usually incompatible.

— David Lowenthal

In January 2014, the BBC announced the sensational acquisition of a painting by Francesco Guardi (1712–1793) by The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, through the Art Council Acceptance in Lieu scheme (BBC 2014).¹ The subsidy campaign, led by the Art Fund to secure this painting for public ownership, involved several prestigious charitable associations, notably the Jo Wilson and the Sir Denis Mahon Trust (Hopkinson 2014, 81). Produced in 1758 for the Grand Tour market, Guardi's painting depicts an unusual view of the Lagoon, and bears the title *Venice: the Fondamenta Nuove with the Lagoon and the Island of San Michele* (Fig. 0.1). The director of the Ashmolean, Christopher Brown, proudly noticed:

This painting brings to the Ashmolean a poetic masterpiece in which Francesco Guardi reveals his full artistic potential. As the first major Venetian view-painting to enter the Museum's collection it makes an inspirational addition to the Britain and Italy Gallery. We are profoundly grateful to the Arts Council, the Art Fund, and other supporters for making this acquisition possible (BBC 2014).

Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of the Arts Council England, equally added:

The fact that this stunning painting has been largely unseen by the public before now demonstrates the importance of the 'Acceptance in Lieu' scheme. Many members of the public will now have the chance to view and interpret this important piece at the Ashmolean when its fate could very easily have meant that it was lost forever from history (*ibid.*).

Similarly, Steve Hopkinson, in the *Art Quarterly*, insisted on the fact that the painting never hung in a public gallery, and that its acquisition was possible through the intervention of the Art Fund (Hopkinson 2014).



Fig. 0.1 - Francesco Guardi (1712–1793), *Venice: the Fondamenta Nuove with the Lagoon and the Island of San Michele*, 1758, oil on canvas, 72x120 cm, The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

Why should a painting by a Venetian artist, we may wonder, represent a 'heritage object' for England? Why should it enrich the 'Britain and Italy Gallery' of an important British public museum? And why do people commit themselves to enhance it with other similar objects, to the point of raising more than two million pounds to ensure that objects of the sort are not 'lost forever from history' or leaving the country? The very fact that such painting can be linked to

the memory of the Venetian Grand Tour provides an adequate storyline to justify the investment. The painting might indeed, as Hopkinson maintains, depict ‘a fleeting moment in Venetian daily life’, but what counts here, it seems, is that that moment, in 1759, could have been English – and as such rightfully included in the English heritage and contributing to the construction of the English identity. Furthermore, it should be added, the painting represents an item that in featuring Venice it partakes to a World Heritage, to which the practice of the British Grand Tour constitutes one of its most glamorous intangible dimensions (Davis and Marvin 2004, 34–49).



Fig. 0.2 - Francesco Guardi (1712–1793), *The Lagoon from the Fondamenta Nuove*, 1759, oil on canvas, 72x120cm, private collection, UK.

The work, which has never been published before, features one of the first *vedute* of this kind pioneered by Guardi, and it was painted indeed for one of the many British *milordi* on the Grand Tour. It is a rare and unusual view; certainly not one of the most picturesque views of Venice, or at least the most sought after during that period. Built in the sixteenth century, the Fondamenta Nuove are located at the north end of the city, toward its *terraferma*, and were rarely featured in eighteenth-century *vedute* – never, as in this case, with the Alps in

their background. Guardi, instead, represented this scenery several times, though often without closing the composition with the Dolomites shrouded in clouds, like here (Bonnet Saint-Georges 2014). The mountains are mostly invisible in the two similar views found at the Kunsthhaus in Zurich (1755-1760) and the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (1765-1770);² another painting (Fig. 0.2), dating from around the same time and still in a private collection, is very similar to the one now in Oxford – the size and point of view are the same, even the position of the crowded boats in the foreground, and so are the mountains that can be seen in the distance (Bonnet Saint-Georges 2014; Morassi 1973, 220). Only the light and the quality of the sky vary from one to the other. The fact that also this view was commissioned by a British Grand Tourist reinforces the hypothesis that Guardi's scenery was particularly cheered in England.

The dissertation I am here about to introduce deals precisely with this scenery – with the legacy of a gaze cast over the Dolomites from the Lagoon near Murano, a view that British Grand Tourists evidently wanted to fix as a rare souvenir of their Venetian sojourn. It is a view that about a century later Victorian travellers would fantasize about, at least since the publication of Anna Jameson's memorable 'The House of Titian', in her *Memoirs and Essays Illustrative of Art, Literature and Social Morals* (1846). Following an information she derived from a local erudite (Cadorin 1833 and 1834), she located the by then already lost Venetian house of Titian in the area of the Fondamenta Nuove, away from the crowded south side of the city (Jameson 1846). The impulse to fancy what Titian could have looked from the little garden of his house emerged:

He then, from 1539, rented the whole of it; and a few years later he took the piece of land, the *terreno vacuo* adjoining, which he fenced in and converted into a delicious garden, extending to the shore. No buildings then rose to obstruct the view; – the Fondamente (sic) Nuove did not

then exist. He looked over the wide canal, which is the thoroughfare between the city of Venice and the Island of Murano; in front the two smaller islands of San Cristoforo and San Michele; and beyond them Murano, rising on the right, with all its domes and campanili, like another Venice. Far off extended the level line of the mainland, and, in the distance, the towering chain of the Friuli Alps, sublime, half defined, with jagged snow-peaks soaring against the sky ... This was the view from the garden of Titian; so unlike any other in the world, that it never would occur to me to compare it with any other. More glorious combinations of sea, mountain, shore, there may be – I cannot tell; *like* it, is nothing that I have ever beheld or imagined (*ibid.*, 42-43).

The description could be read as an illustration of Guardi's painting, now at the Ashmolean. But what is more interesting is that Jameson also located in those 'Friuli Alps' the birthplace of Titian. Her piece appealed – as Adele Ernstom rightly observed – to 'the English tourist's fantasized desire to approach or recapture the painter's aura by visiting his former haunts' (Ernstom 1999, 430); but in a deeper sense she made of Titian's house the starting point for an itinerary that would recuperate, together with that gaze, also Titian's Alpine horizon, spurring the fantasy of climbing and rambling in the background of his canvasses.

Guided by the romantic compass of Jameson, Ruskin and Turner, Victorian Grand Tourists sketched through their wanderings in the mountain backdrop of Venice a cultural 'Petit Tour' of global significance. As they zigzagged across the different frontiers of an unfrequented land that they still perceived as belonging to Venice, Victorian travellers discovered a unique blending of natural, aesthetic and cultural values utterly different from those refracted through the bombastic conquests of the Western Alps achieved during the 'Golden Age of Mountaineering' (1854-65; see Gasparetto 2012; Douglas et al. 2011; Kember 2003; Hansen 1995, 1991; Nicolson 1997; Clark 1953). Filtered through the

cultivated experience of the Venetian Grand Tour, their encounter with the Dolomites is marked by a series of distinct cultural practices that paradigmatically define what I call here the 'Silver Age of Mountaineering'.

These cultural practices reveal a range of interests that are more ethnographic than imperialistic, more feminine than masculine, more artistic than sportive – rather than racing to summits, the Silver Age is about rambling, rather than conquering peaks, it is about sketching them. It is through these practices that the Dolomite Mountains came to be known in England as Titian Country, spurring among travellers the sentimental drive to ramble in the backgrounds of Titian's paintings; a drive, we should add, which found its most exemplary synecdoche in the 'myth of Venice' repeatedly described by Denis Cosgrove (1982, 1988, and 1993). It was precisely during the nineteenth century that the 'myth of Venice' was refashioned by British travellers – first, among all, by Lord Byron (1788-1824) and John Ruskin (1819-1900).

It is significant, I argue here, that the link between the new Guardi, so unique in representing that Alpine horizon, and that equally unique British gaze cast over those mountains beyond Murano has not been noticed. The 'tourist maze' that today's visitors of Venice experience in an increasing number all times of the year (Davis and Marvin 2004) does not seem to be interested in Jameson's nostalgic pilgrimage to the 'relic' of Titian's house – Venice and the Dolomites appear to be disconnected one another. Today, only few people tend to mob around the Fondamenta Nuove, if not for taking the *vaporetto* to the islands of Murano, Burano and Torcello; few guidebooks, if any, tell them to pay attention, along that course, to the faint mountainous scenery that in the clearest days is possible to see from the boat. Even the most credited art historians, in commenting about the view that Guardi painted from that spot avoid mentioning the singularity and the cultural significance of that background; Antonio Morassi, for instance, in his comprehensive study on Guardi,

encourages the viewer to pay attention to the details of the foreground, leaving the background where it is (Morassi 1973, 220; Fig. 0.3).³ Jameson's scenery seems to be lost in the clouds.



Fig. 0.3 - Francesco Guardi (1712–1793), *Venice: the Fondamenta Nuove with the Lagoon and the Island of San Michele*, 1758, oil on canvas, 72x120 cm, The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (details).

In the attempt to capture that scenery and the desire to travel in it, this dissertation will focus on a heritage to unravel – a hidden heritage lost in the mountainous background of Venice and in a series of distinct cultural practices and performances that fostered their momentary ascendancy in Britain during the long Victorian period. It is a heritage linked to a particular way of ‘seeing’, ‘exploiting’ and ‘challenging’ a mountainous landscape scenery, which revealed, during the interwar period roughly delimited by Waterloo (1815) and Sarajevo (1914), the nostalgia for a series of bygone symbols once attached to the British tradition of voyaging to the Continent. During this pivotal interval, between the ending of the Napoleonic wars and the beginning of the First World War, Italy, and Venice in particular, continued to play a crucial role in the British

imagination, when the distinctively aristocratic mode of traveling typical of the Grand Tour had already, by then, lost its meaning.

Far from constituting anymore a crucial stage in the process of acculturation of the British elite, the travel to Italy persisted during that interval as a chimera – a dreamy voyage on a well-beaten path to fantasize longingly about a certain idea of culture, a certain idea of style, a certain idea of status irremediably lost on the shores of the Mediterranean (Buzard 1993b, 26). In the post-Napoleonic era, Britons, like all other emerging nations, were forced to acquire that culture, that style and that status within the borders of their own land (Ousby 1990; Colley 1992a, 171–173; Thomas 2004; Dekker 2004, 14; Lamb 2009). The ‘beaten path’ of Italy became a landscape of memory, providing a provisional escape from that task – a flickering distant picture into which Britons, once ‘stranded in the present’ (Fritzsche 2004), could only longingly contemplate their own absence.

In the following century, after the Great War, the symbols acquired in centuries of travelling abroad were recycled for an internal quest for an English identity *In Search of England* (Morton 1927; Lowerson 1980, 260–64; Wiener 1981, 72–80; Lowenthal 1991a, and 1991b; Howkins 1986 and 2001; Matless 1998, and 2001; Kumar 2003, 229–232; Ward 2004, 54–58). It is in that quest for identity, in the rural English countryside of England, that foreign symbols, fabricated through a gaze performed and perfected abroad, became symbols of an intangible English heritage; an English heritage, more decisively allegiant to an idea of Englishness than Britishness, as David Lowenthal maintained: ‘heritage countryside is less British than English’ (Lowenthal 1991b, 8; Langlands 1999; Kumar 2003, 1–16). It may be, as Peter Madlener further qualified, that this anti-modern and anti-urban version of Englishness was in fact shared by an influential and unrepresentative minority (Mandler 1997; Ward 2004, 54). Nevertheless, its recirculation abroad was powerful enough to

compose a distinctively English idea of looking at a landscape, charged with a considerable amount of emotional prestige – a distinct outlook constructed in circulatory phases that contemplates moments of travels, moments of literary recollections, moments of artistic reconfigurations, moments of touristic exploitations and moments, in our days, of filmic adaptations (Winter and Keegan-Phipps 2013; Sherwood 2013; Matikkala 2011; Kumar 2003; Colls and Dodd 1986; Robbins 1998; Stapleton 1994; Colley 1992a). It is the intangibility of an English gaze on an inhospitable and distant mountain range, rather than its alleged salience for an entire nation, that this work seeks to unravel.

The historical scenario sketched out above forms the cultural background of this study. Its foreground is occupied by the Dolomite Mountains, located in a secluded swathe of the Italian Eastern Alps and situated off the main roads bringing travellers to Venice, in a roughly square territory stretching south of the hydrographical watershed of the streams flowing into the Adriatic, between roughly the basins drained by the river Adige and the river Piave. During the Victorian period, it was not possible to see them along the main roads linking Munich, Luzern and Milan to Venice through the Brenner, Resia or Stelvio Passes; but later in the period, a new road, joining Venice to Toblach/Dobbiaco, through the Cadore and the Ampezzo valleys, they became fully enjoyable. It is a view, therefore, that for geographical and historical reasons remained largely hidden from the eyes of British Grand Tourists on their way to Italy – a view located ‘off the beaten path’.

Still scarcely mentioned in current historical landscape studies, the Dolomite region presents itself as a unique Alpine borderland, located in the North-East of Italy. Its uniqueness is associated, politically, with its ‘debatable land’ status (Lamont and Rossington 2007), as a contested territory divided by different ethnic, linguistic, and historical frontiers. The geographical designations ‘Dolomite Mountains’ (referring to mountains predominantly made of dolomite

rock) and 'Dolomites' (referring to the territory in which these mountains are to be found in their highest density) have a history – an English history – clearly distinct from the one that motivates other taxonomies. This history is linked to a gaze that finds its ideal origin in Titian's garden in Venice and its magnified focus on the particular landscape scenery that the bizarre geo-morphology of these mountains creates.

It is a history marked by a distinct metropolitan character (Ciancio 2005), promoted during the nineteenth century by some German scientists, looking for clues to understand the earth's past, and endorsed by some British travellers, searching for an uncontaminated mountain scenery, away from the already crowded path of the Swiss Alps. During the first half of the nineteenth century, these mountains became the privileged destination of some enlightened geologists, puzzled by the strange stratification of igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks, which threatened to challenge the most accredited theories of the time on the Earth's formation. These geologists, at the same time, provide the first morphological description of these enigmatic mountains, and recurred to the competence of artists to portray their most bizarre outlines, utterly different from the ones found in the Western or Central Alps. Their verbal and visual descriptions, confined initially in papers and articles primarily destined for the scientific community, re-circulated in the British travel guides of the time, with the result of disseminating the first portrayals of what is now known as the 'Dolomite landscape'.

The main point of my argument is that the symbolic formation of the magnificent scenery of the Dolomite mountains needed that British gaze to be perceived – the well-trained gaze of a nation that since the period of the Stuart dynasty had learned to forge its identity through the mirror of a generalized sense of geographical space, made of artistic, textual and aesthetic 'ways of seeing' (Cosgrove 1984), able to supplant a localized sense of political place,

made of 'customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits constituting a distinct complex', in a direct engagement with 'actual landscapes' (Olwig 2008b, 166; 1996, 630–631). These two ways of understanding landscape subtend the duplicitous semantics of the term, which Kenneth Olwig dynamically extracts from Dr Johnson 1755 classic dictionary: (1) 'A region; the prospect of a country'; (2) 'A picture, representing an extent of space, with the various objects in it' (*ibid.*, 159). This 'duplicity' (Daniels 1989) is not to be confused with what Claudio Minca calls the 'paradox of landscape', inherent to an idea of landscape as a 'geographical metaphor able to refer to both an object and its description' (2007c, 433; see also Porteous 1990, 4); landscape (2) does not describe landscape (1), but rather, as Olwig maintains, it masks or conceals it, transforming 'place' into 'space' (Olwig 2008b, 166). Englishness, in this paper, pertains, therefore, to this particular British gaze able to afford this transformation and to disclose the 'diaphoric' meaning of landscape (Tuan 1978, 366).

As amply documented by the work of Olwig (2002), in relation to the birth of the national parks in the United States, this utterly British gaze acted as an exportable template that in its exportability was able to unfold all its imperialistic potentialities (Mitchell 1994b). Rarely, however, the effects of such potentialities have been explored on a field devoid of any political links to Great Britain or its colonial empire. In this work, I endeavour to illustrate the cultural outcomes of this gaze as applied to a landscape, such as the Dolomite one, that has never been part of or associated with any British imperialistic design. In the eyes of the travellers here taken up, the Dolomite valleys provided a cultural 'place' to be rhetorically reduced to 'picturesque' views of sometime Tyrolean sometime Venetian character; the peaks, instead, offered a uniform 'space', above any ethnic frontiers, to be 'symbolically transformed' (Cosgrove 1984;

Backhaus and Murungi 2009; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Meinig 1979) into a globalized 'sublime' scenery.

Following this 'diaphoric' divide between place and space, the frontier I intend to unmask here is neither the one, already studied, that distinguishes between different areas of linguistic or ethnic minorities in the region (Pergher 2009; Steininger 2003; Kaplan 2000; Burger 1966), nor the hidden one inherent in the very notion of the 'diaphoric meaning of landscape' (Tuan 1978, 366, 370; Daniels 1989; Olwig 2008b, 158–159). I instead heuristically locate this frontier above the sea level – on the horizontal divide between valleys and peaks. The recent inscription of the Dolomites in the World Heritage List (2009) clearly privileged the 'metropolitan' project that German and British travellers concurred to launch during the nineteenth century, transforming the contested narrative of a borderland region into the pacifying narrative of a landscape scenery to be appreciated globally.

The powerful magnetism of the Dolomite landscape is mostly due to its unique geological features (Panizza 2009); features, however, that needed a trained gaze to be appreciated for their scenic values. British travellers possessed it; and they also possessed the proper vocabulary and the suitable communicative infrastructure to transform what until then was seen just as a sensational geological oddity into a 'symbolic landscape' of global significance – a significance most recently acknowledged in the inclusion of the Dolomites in the UNESCO World Heritage List. In the official UNESCO documentation, the British contribution to this heritage is aptly credited (Gianolla 2008, 30–32, 75–89); but the list of institutional and individual supporters for that inscription omits any British name (*ibid.*, 125–141).⁴ It is a history that Britons have largely forgotten, but a history to which Italians are giving today a particular relevance.

There where the valleys spoke German, Italian or Ladin, and where different ways of living – consolidated in different customary traditions and governed

through different political norms – created a tension that would ultimately culminate in the Great War, their peaks spoke English, at least for a certain period of time. As they zigzagged across the different frontiers of a neglected land that had yet to become fully Italian, Victorian travellers successfully renamed the entire region as ‘Dolomite Mountains’ or ‘Dolomites’ – a unified geographical label that by privileging the fantastic outline of their unique peaks ended up masking the customary, political and ethnic differences of their contested valleys. The compilers of the UNESCO documentation insisted precisely on the aesthetic and scientific values of their peaks to promote the Dolomites globally, leaving aside from that promotion the debatable nature of their valleys.

It is worth looking more closely at this documentation to see how these values are mobilized and negotiated. In proposing the preservation of the Dolomite heritage under criterion VII, describing outstanding natural beauty (‘aesthetic integrity’), in addition to criterion VIII, describing outstanding geohistorical significance (‘geological integrity’), the authors of the proposal highlighted the crucial contribution of British travellers:

Amongst the most important accounts of this type are the book by Josiah Gilbert (painter) and George Cheetham Churchill (naturalist), published in London in 1864, and the book by Amelia B. Edwards (author), published in 1873. The success of the first, *The Dolomite Mountains*, introduced these mountains as the ‘Dolomites’ to the public at large, extending the name of the mineral to the whole region. The second, as can be guessed from the title *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys*, spread the image of the Dolomites as an unspoilt world, ‘uncorrupted’ by industrial civilisation. This romantic image of uncontaminated mountains was one of the main reasons compelling subsequent travellers to go to the Dolomites (Gianolla 2008, 88).

The here synthetically rehearsed British ‘invention’ of the Dolomites as a new tourist destination occurred in fact on the ground of their German ‘discovery’; if the British ‘invention’ is associated to the aesthetic appreciation of their landscape scenery, which acquired its prominence during the second half of the nineteenth century (UNESCO criterion VII), its ‘discovery’ is linked to the geological relevance that the region assumed during the first half of that century, becoming one of the most sought-after areas in Europe for botanists, mineralogists and geologists (UNESCO criterion VIII).

To fully understand what I mean here for ‘invention’, it is useful to distinguish it from the idea of ‘discovery’. Histories of the ‘discovery’ of the Dolomites insist on the relevance of three pioneering foreign contributions to the natural understanding and aesthetic appreciation of their territory: a French/Swiss one, bearing the name of mineralogists Déodat Gratet de Dolomieu (1750-1801) and Nicolas Theodore de Saussure (1767-1845); a German one, referring to the researches of Leopold von Buch (1774-1852) and Alexander von Humboldt (1769- 1859); and a British one, coinciding with the explorations of the region by John Ball (1818-1889) and Josiah Gilbert (1814-1892). These contributions reveal three different kinds of interests: a mineralogical one, resulting in the chemical identification of the rock henceforth called ‘dolomite’; a geological one, resulting in the first theories of the orographic formation of the mountains; and an aesthetic one, resulting in the attribution of the current name to the entire region.

The two criteria considered in UNESCO nomination document describe the heritage of the Dolomites by capitalizing on the contributions of these intimately connected foreign and metropolitan matrices. They define a landscape whose ‘aesthetic’ and ‘scientific’ characteristics mutually reinforce the idea of an uncontested heritage situated at the level of its inhospitable peaks

(core zones) and their immediate grassland areas (buffer zones), leaving the contested heritage of its valleys fully unconsidered:

Thus the Dolomites can be perfectly interpreted both scientifically and aesthetically and therefore their nomination is deliberately proposed under criterion viii and criterion vii simultaneously. As the history of their discovery explains, these two criteria are indissolubly linked, just as the tie between scientific interest and love of natural beauty of their 'discoverers' is inseparable (Gianolla 2008, 32).

The exclusion of the valleys is justified as 'an historically proven fact, confirmed in art and literature' ('The aesthetic integrity excludes valley bottoms from the most significant views since the universally recognised image of the Dolomites coincides with the integral vision of the mountain groups from top to bottom', *ibid.*, 282); the inclusion within buffer zones of grasslands, above the treelines, with limited and transitory human activity, serves to merely protect the landscape scenery – 'the buffer zones guarantees the integrity of the views of single mountain groups (from the grasslands to the summits) and protects the nominated property from the effects of any human activity incompatible with their outstanding universal values' (*ibid.*).

The appreciation of the Dolomite landscape scenery 'is only possible from high altitudes and determined positions: near the mountain ranges, usually far from inhabited valleys' (*ibid.*); the valleys and villages are therefore confined outside the nine UNESCO areas because from them 'a complete vision of the ranges is rendered impossible by the slopes themselves' (*ibid.*). The heritage that UNESCO protects is marked, therefore, by a notion of landscape as a 'way of seeing' that excludes a 'way of living' in it. Non-traditional human activities, such as hiking and climbing, count as compatible practices, while traditional ones, such as hunting or fishing, are instead excluded or drastically limited (*ibid.*, 282).

UNESCO criterion VII exploits a gaze that British travellers elevated to a paradigm, by diffusing through tourist books the image of a Dolomite scenery unique in the world; criterion VIII reveals, instead, an origin that in its ideological procedures goes back to a German gaze, highly influenced by the natural sciences. Both gazes emerged in the Romantic period, both were in a sense mutually corroborating, both subtended a view of nature as a geographical space, able to satisfy different national needs of identity formation. But if the German gaze pursued a fiction of 'scientific' authenticity, aimed at 'discovering' the hidden laws governing the development of landforms, the British one pursued a fiction of 'aesthetic' genuineness, with the result of 'inventing' a landscape able to stimulate embodied emotions and a sense of uncontaminated beauty.

Returning in 1998 to the conceptual framework that informed, back in 1984, his landmark study, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Denis Cosgrove openly admitted to having paid little attention to the meaning of 'symbolic landscape', indicating some of the approaches that he would have liked to consider to fill that gap:

If an entire chapter is devoted to exegesis of the phrase 'social formation', 'symbolic landscape' is nowhere precisely defined. I was astonished to find that it does not even appear in the index, and the theory of symbolism underlying the work is left unclear. No reference is made to semiotic or other communicative theories of symbolism, to iconographic or other methods of symbolic hermeneutics of interpretation, to the relations between symbol and myth, nor to forms of symbolic interaction (Cosgrove 1998, xxv).

In subsequent works, Cosgrove did not clarify his understanding of 'symbolic landscape' in a dedicated theoretical contribution that would take into consideration the here outlined approaches. He did, however, inflect the

concept in various interpretative essays on specific topics, manifesting a privileged allegiance to the iconographic method practiced in art history, notably 'Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky and Ernst Gombrich' (*ibid.*). In these essays, the symbol emerges as an empirical tool to illustrate the enduring iconic power of the landscape as a 'way of seeing' (*ibid.*).

Despite his increased attention towards other ways of understanding and reading a landscape, notably those responding to a phenomenological or non-representative epistemology, Cosgrove has always remained fundamentally loyal to his 'iconic' approach, defending it quite boldly in his very last monograph, *Geography and Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World*, against what he evaluated as the ascendant 'distrust of vision ... in a number of theoretical dispositions', quite symptomatic of the 'strained relations between geography and the pictorial image' in some of the most current trends in cultural geography (2008). It re-emerges from here Lowenthal's need to identify and study the range of responses to 'key symbolic landscapes – landscapes that perennially catch the attention of mankind and seem to stand for, reflect or incorporate, the meaning and purpose of life itself' (Lowenthal 1967, 2; Cosgrove 1982, 146). I would keep, here, in mind that 'distances are not only geographic but take the form of networks of attraction that carry prestige through various channels, passing over or penetrating other civilizational zones' (Katzenstein 2008, 18), a notion to which I shall return in a moment.

I am less concerned here with the distinction between Englishness and Britishness, or with the theoretical discussion about the different symbolic ingredients that allow 'identity' to become 'national' at a given point in history (Mandler 2006). I am more concerned here with their transnational recirculation, and, in particular, in the enduring transnational dialogue that England has entertained with its 'neighbourhoods' abroad. The circulatory movement towards the outside and back towards the inside – from home to

abroad and from abroad to home – is a persistent gesture in the formation of English identity. This might bring us to adopt Linda Colley's famous methodological procedure of looking at our identity by asking what we are not, or of defining Englishness against an Other located outside of England, so as to be able to unravel 'the enigma of Englishness' by exploring England's engagement with its distant neighbours (Colley 1992b; Kumar 2003, xii; Mandler 2006, 284). In landscape studies, this approach has been notably adopted by David Matless, with the fruitful definition of an 'Englishness in variation', in which national identity 'is regarded as a relative concept always constituted through definitions of Self and Other and always subject to internal differentiations' (Matless 1998, 17), recently discussed by Divya Tolia-Kelly from a productive postcolonial perspective (Tolia-Kelly 2006).

The traditional storyline, through which this movement, from abroad to home and from home to abroad, has been figured, constitutes a progressive narrative divided into several 'periods' interspersed with several 'epochs', variously defined according to the reasons and drives that put people on the move.⁵ The chronological distribution of epochs along this storyline is controversial. It compels us to acknowledge a teleological and stage-oriented idea of history. But instead of taking this movement as a story developing into history, Randall Collins has suggested to consider it as a series of repetitive chains of interaction rituals (Collins 2004); symbols might find their consolidation in a given historical epoch, but what counts is their circulation and recirculation in different interactions at different historical latitudes. Through this recurrent mobilization, the activity of symbols and the practices surrounding them can be enhanced or depressed; symbols, therefore, are not attached to a particular 'spirit of time' nor to a give 'spirit of place', but ought to be understood as vessels of meaning to be reinterpreted and reinvented

through time and space. Mandler calls them the 'symbolic reserves' of English identity (Mandler 2006).

Scholars of tourism have detected in this alternatively centrifugal or centripetal movement from a centre to another a general agreement to what Judith Adler has termed 'the underlying narrative structures, or story lines, on which the meanings of travel performances are founded' (Adler 1989, 1375; Buzard 1993b, 16). Crucial for the heuristic outlook of this work is Adler's insistence on the attention to be paid on the dynamics of 'historical breaks and continuities' that make these storylines accessible even in conditions utterly different from those in which they took shape originally. Away from Adler's rhetorical turn, however, I tend to understand her usage of 'story lines or tropes' in terms of enduring or ground-breaking 'symbols' emerging and circulating at different epochs on a calendar and in different places on a map, whereby the complicity between 'calendars' and 'maps' configure here the possibility for a traveller to exploit these symbols unreservedly and move – imaginatively – through time and space. The two figures also explain my allegiance, in this project, to both history and geography in defining cultural heritage (Baker 2003).

Not only travel puts people on the move between different times and spaces, but it also put them into a particular interactive mood, making them able to manipulate these symbols in a dialogue with the different agents and the different items they encounter along the road. In this context, the enactment or activation of symbols, be they old or new, is negotiated through an interaction between different travel roles that takes place in accordance to a particular travel ritual, similar, in principle, to the idea of 'performance' proposed by Adler (1989). The basic model of these interactions is indeed a set of performances and conversations that make up the landscape through which the traveller moves while abroad. But it would be misleading to think of that 'landscape' only

in terms of physical presence; the landscape that travellers construct is also conditioned by the stock of symbols – both material and mental – that they pack in their bags before leaving home. One of the tasks, in this research, is to carefully unpack those bags looking for the symbols that eventually recirculate in the loop of heritage formation.

In giving such a framework to this project, I am pursuing the suggestion made by the sociologist Randall Collins, mentioned above, in his seminal book *Interaction Ritual Chains* (2004), that through these interactions or performances the subject experiences feelings of excitement or depression measurable in terms of what he calls ‘emotional energy’ (EE): ‘the social emotion par excellence’ (*ibid.*, xiv). Successful rituals produce emotional energy and convey a strong sense of belonging or solidarity within a certain group; failed rituals drain them and provoke the disquieting feeling of absence or alienation. The traveller, like any other individual, is an EE-seeker in the market of available interaction rituals (IR):

What I call IR chains is a model of motivation that pulls and pushes individuals from situation to situation, steered by the market-like patterns of how each participant’s stock of social resources – their EE and their membership symbols (or cultural capital) accumulated in previous IRs – meshes with those of each person they encounter. The degree to which these elements mesh makes up the ingredients for what kind of IR will happen when these persons meet. The relative degree of emotional intensity that each IR reaches is implicitly compared with other IRs within those persons’ social horizons, drawing individuals to social situations where they feel more emotionally involved, and away from other interactions that have a lower emotional magnetism or an emotional repulsion. The market for EE in IRs thus is an overarching mechanism motivating individuals as they move through the IR chains that make up their lives (*ibid.*, xiv).

In this context, Collins also provides a set of 'Rules for Unravelling Symbols', which I have followed here to unravel various ingredients of Englishness circulating in the formation of Dolomite heritage (*ibid.*, 95-101). Collins considers a set of situated and discrete interactions, in which symbols emerge and subsequently circulate in a series of loops of emotional energy, fostering feelings of social solidarity and community bonding in a given group. Collins' methodology allowed me to explore the English character of the Dolomite landscape, by investigating the life cycle of a set of unravelled symbols from their origin, through their subsequent English transformation, up to their institutional exploitation at a global level.

Collins suggests to ponder initially the intensity of symbols mobilized in a given interaction, and to evaluate their status in three distinct, but sometimes concomitant, symbolic re-circulations. For the first circulation, Collins understands the first set of interaction rituals that ascribed to symbols their original intensity, a primary realm of rituals and the symbols that they charge with emotional energy. For second circulation, he considers a further realm of rituals responsible for making those symbols circulate in the different social networks, whether taken as positive or negative emblems, or just treated reflexively as items of news, gossip or reputation; it is through these situations that these symbols become representations of groups located outside from the primary realm of rituals. The third circulation of symbols concerns individuals and the inner conversations that make up their thinking or the fantasies that make up their inner self (*ibid.*, 98-99). In various ways, I tried in what follows to offer clues for an analysis of all three levels of symbolic circulations.

My starting point is a set of symbols that are artistic, scientific and sportive in nature, originating from three main matrices of topographic memory (Nora 1996; Della Dora 2008; 2011; 2013) – the Venetian Grand Tour, the geological discovery of the Dolomites, and the Golden Age of Mountaineering. Matrices of

topographic memory might be better understood as 'symbolic reserves' (Mandler 2006), from which to draw clues for unravelling Matless' notion of Englishness in variation (Matless 1998, 17). In this case, these three matrices provided British travellers with the symbolic toolbox for 'inventing' the Dolomite Mountains. What they found there was able to satisfy their appetite for novelty, without forcing them to renounce their old passion for the picturesque, or to venture in landscapes too exotic to be safely brought home. For the inhabitants of the Dolomite districts, be they Tyrolean, Venetian or Ladin in origin, these mountains merely constituted a source of economic exploitation – their scenery exemplified a landscape as the product of a 'way of living'. For British travellers, instead, that 'way of living' was merely a feature confined to the 'unfrequented valleys'; their 'untrodden peaks' were left free to be reinvented as a new 'way of seeing' utterly unknown to the locals.

Today, disencumbered from their historical conditions and rehashed in different discursive patterns, these symbols re-emerge in the controversial debate on the cultural heritage of the Dolomites. This debate, critically revived after their inscription in the World Heritage List, subtly exploits discourses of Englishness at sites where the economy of mass tourism and the internationalization of leisure cultures appear to overshadow ethnic and national divides. In the epilogue of this dissertation, I will discuss some aspects of this most recent recirculation of symbols more in detail. It suffices here to repeat that while perfectly aware of crossing multiple ethnic, linguistic and political borders, British travellers were mainly concerned with a picturesque landscape scenery cast over the mountains – a scenery that they could freely translate into their own language.

James Buzard has amply shown how the voyage to Italy persisted during the nineteenth century as part of a diluted interpretation of the Romantic travel (Buzard 1991); and he has also exposed the modes in which that particular style

of travelling was ultimately referable to symbols acquired during the Grand Tour (2002), engendering the feeling of an inescapable 'belatedness' in Victorian travellers (Schoina 2009). Distinct from the Mount Athos, studied by Veronica Della Dora, and its multi-layered re-enactments of symbols, the Dolomite Mountains were not attached to a distinct storyline to re-enact and reinvent, they were not associated with a mythology to re-evoke (Della Dora 2011). They had, however, a topographic 'sponsor' identifiable in the birthplace of Titian in Cadore. Ideally located between two zones of prestige (Collins 2001), Venice and Switzerland, the 'untroddenness' and 'unfrequentedness' of the Dolomites offered Victorians the possibility to conquer a landscape scenery hitherto uncontaminated – and to invent it as a fashionable escape from modernity.

According to Randall Collins, zones of prestige are 'places where culturally impressive activities go on, places which attract attention. Impressiveness radiates outward from a civilizational core, attracting people inward. They come to renew or confirm their identities as members of a civilization; they come also as sojourners, students or visitors, attracted by a civilization's magnetism, its cultural charisma, which they wish in some measure to share. Thus a zone of civilizational prestige is also a pattern of social contacts, a flow of people and their attention across space' (Collins 2001, 133). Zones of prestige, in this sense, are not to be confused with 'free-standing, monolithic and unchanging essences' (Katzenstein 2011, 152; 2009, 18) nor with simple storehouses of tourist attractions. They emerge, instead, in moments in which the symbolic essence of those storehouses is contested among rival positions.

The cities from which the Dolomites are visible – Bolzano/Bozen and Venice – are culturally and historically distinct. They constitute two poles of a contested territory divided by different ethnic, linguistic and historical frontiers – a classic example of a 'debatable land'. It is worth keeping in mind the

different cultural intensity of these two poles. While Venice certainly represents the paramount example of a 'zone of civilizational prestige' (Collins 2001), and therefore an autonomous pole of attraction in its own right, Bolzano/Bozen constituted, during the period taken here into consideration, a relatively modest city in the periphery of the Austrian Empire – a city to go through rather than a city to arrive at in an ideal tourist itinerary. As they meandered through their peaks and valleys, British travellers were keen in performing four kinds of comparisons – with Venice and its Romantic aura, with Switzerland and its Alpine sensationalism, with Austria and its Germanic folklore, with London and its embodiment of modernity. In the travelogues taken up here, these competing zones of civilizational prestige, in the sense outlined by Randall Collins, offer the topological system that allowed British travellers to put the Dolomites on a tourist map and imbued them with cultural prestige.

The Victorian discovery of the mountainous background of Venice emerged as an alternative not only to Switzerland and the Western Alps, but also to the 'beaten path' of Italy and its cloyed allure. The 'Dolomite Mountains' allowed British travellers to fantasize about a 'Petit Tour' through which they could safely recycle some travel styles attached to the Grand Tour. The 'untrodden peaks' and the 'unfrequented valleys' of the Dolomite districts offered them a new Arcadia (Darby 2000, 14) – a new spectacular 'fairyland' in which to perform new and old travel practices and to promote new and old travel symbols, between the watery sceneries of the Venetian lagoon and the mountainous sceneries of the Venetian highlands. The bulk of these practices and performances represents today a heritage figuratively lost in the clouds.

This study, divided into two parts, is devoted to the latter in its intimate connection to the former. In the first part ('Matrices of Topographic Memory'), I will present three ways of transforming an 'actual landscape' into a 'symbolic landscape' through practices that embody three different styles of travel.

Chapter 1 ('The Alps and the Grand Tour') deals with a landscape as the aesthetic product of a 'way of seeing' a geographical 'scenery', imbued with artistic and poetic symbols. Chapter 2 ('The Laboratory of the Picturesque') explores a landscape as the product of a 'way of exploiting' a geographical 'terrain', mediated through scientific and touristic symbols. Chapter 3 ('The Playground of Europe') exposes a landscape as a product of a 'way of challenging' a geographical 'playground', filtered through sportive and material symbols. The notions of 'scenery', 'terrain' and 'playground' are here proposed as three performative inflections of 'symbolic landscape', understood as a generalized sense of geographical 'space' able to supplant a localized sense of political 'place', made of 'customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits' (Olwig 2008b, 166 and 1996, 630–631).

In the second part ('The Invention of the Dolomites'), I will illustrate the ways in which these symbols re-circulated in a selection of travel discourses linked to the Dolomites, branding them as a British 'invention'. Chapter 4 ('The Silver Age of Mountaineering') will expose the blending of pictorial, geological and sportive symbols in the pioneering Dolomite books by Josiah Gilbert (artist), George Cheetham Churchill (geologist), John Ball (botanist and alpinist) and Amelia Edwards (novelist). Chapter 5 ('Titian Country') will show how the Dolomite Mountains became the pearl of an artistic itinerary in the Venetian Highlands. Chapter 6 ('Picturesque Mountains') will expose how the picturesque features of the Dolomites acquired a symbolic value in the art of Elijah Walton. Chapter 7 ('Dolomite Close-Ups') will focus on the 'prominence' of the Dolomites as the paradise for British rock-climbers, portrayed in the feats of Joseph Sanger Davies. Chapter 8 ('King Laurin's Garden') will discuss the adoption of the Dolomites as a model for the English rock-garden (Reginald Farrer), in a time in which symbols of Englishness were replaced by symbols of

Austrianness, in the promotion of the Dolomites as luxurious tourist destination for the elites of Mitteleuropa.

Heritage has empowered people. We feel vested to pursue and protect the prestige of our tangible and intangible legacies in ways that are less culturally determined than emotionally construed; heritage is rather a matter of faith than a matter of truth. The power acquired in the game of heritage is measurable in bits of emotional energy that circulate in our interactions and fuel our sense of belonging to a zone of prestige, symbolically charged with an aura of the past, civilizational magnetism and cultural charisma. We are proud of the place we live in because its impressiveness attracts other people; its local knowledge becomes less important than its global acknowledgement. The more people are involved the more we enjoy that special collective effervescence which allows us to transform our place into a sacred space. We become the guardians of a cult: the cult of the essence of our place. Its magnificence radiates outwards. But what if our place is not ours anymore? What if a new symbolic formation subverts our proprietary claims in ways that we cannot rebut? What if its legitimacy challenges our pride by threatening to transform it into shame if we only decide to defend it? Deprived of a place that was once ours, we are either pushed away or forced to become the acolytes of a new cult celebrated by new guardians. Our sacred space becomes their place; their rituals supplant ours; our symbols become obsolete. We might even forget we once were there. That place becomes foreign to us. And so are the Dolomites for us.

The dynamics sketched out above mobilize some of the concepts that drive this study. These concepts have now become perfunctory in unmasking the conflict-driven nature of heritage as an instrumental matrix to generate civilizational prestige in a global environment (Collins 2001; Adler 2009; Katzenstein 2008). As Lowenthal maintained (1997, 227), conflict is endemic in heritage debates; and it emerges, in particular, where multiple and overlapping

legacies are claimed – at the regional, national and transnational levels. In its debatable dimension, heritage reveals itself as a notion ‘in between’, sharing its positional duplicity with concepts such as place, landscape or travel (Entrikin 1991; Daniels 1989; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Coleman and Crang 2002).

In conclusion, I would like to synthetically illustrate this conflictual dimension of heritage through one of Italo Calvino’s *Invisible Cities*, a series of fictional pieces that in its clarity has become a popular source for posing theoretical questions about environment and society (Becker 2007, 270–284; Powell 2007, 33–66; Twining 2000). In the carefully constructed architecture of Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* (Mengaldo 1980), the city of Leandra occupies the central position (Calvino 1974, 78–79). Two types of household gods, the Lares and the Penates, quarrel relentlessly over its ‘true essence’. The Penates, referring themselves to specific cultural traditions, ‘bring out the old people, the great-grandparents, the great-aunts, the family of the past’; ‘they are the city’s soul, even if they arrived last year; and they believe they take Leandra with them when they emigrate’. The Lares, whose loyalty is instead to a house or lot in the city, ‘consider the Penates temporary guests, importunate, intrusive; the real Leandra is theirs, which gives form to all it contains, the Leandra that was there before all these upstarts arrived and that will remain when all have gone away’. What makes Leandra that what it is are neither the traditions of its people nor the features of its environment, but bustle of competing voices in their constant interaction.

In the particular case of the Dolomite Mountains, the interaction between Lares (‘spirits of the place’) and Penates (‘spirits of people’) is topographically staged at different altitudes – the Penates dwell in their valleys and the Lares in their peaks. In heritage studies, the contested heritage of the Dolomite Mountains is often associated with the debatable status of their region, divided by different ethnic, linguistic, and historical frontiers. Rarely, however, the

topographical designation 'Dolomite Mountains' or simply 'Dolomites' is employed to indicate the contested dimension of their territory; when the discourse focuses on political or ethnic issues and with the overlapping 'neighbourhoods' that they delimit (Spielman and Logan 2013), other labels tend to be preferred. We could say, therefore, that when Gilbert and Churchill coined the name Dolomite Mountains for the once called Venetian Alps, in 1864, they were acting as temporary Penates trying to engage in a dialogue with the Lares. Today their names circulate again in their relentless interaction – I tried here to listen to it.

Notes

¹ The Acceptance in Lieu scheme enables British taxpayers to transfer important works of art and other heritage objects into public ownership, reducing the encumbrance of paying inheritance tax.

² Reproductions of Guardi's *San Cristoforo, San Michele and Murano, Seen from the Fondamenta Nuove*, 1755-60, oil on canvas, 60.5x91 cm, Kunsthau, Zürich, and *The Lagoon Looking toward Murano from the Fondamenta Nuove*, 1765-70, 31.7x52.7 cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, can be seen at <http://www.wikipaintings.org/>.

³ Here the quotation in full: 'Quel che più colpisce nei riguardi stilistici in queste marine sono le macchiette minuscole che affollano le imbarcazioni e spesso si agitano con gesti di curiosità' (Morassi 1973, 220).

⁴ The list includes the following prominent personalities: Reinhold Messner, eminent alpinist and creator of the MMM Messner Mountain Museums (Meran, Italy); Prof. Maria Bianca Cita, Chair of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) Sub-commission on Stratigraphic Classification (University of Milan, Italy); Prof. Forese Carlo Wezel, President of the Italian Geological Society (University of Urbino, Italy); Michael J. Orchard, Chair of the IUGS Sub-commission on Triassic Stratigraphy (Geological Survey Canada, Vancouver, Canada); Francesco Zarlenga, President of ProGEO, the European Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage; Prof. Gian Gaspare Zuffa, President of the Italian Federation of Earth Sciences (University of Bologna, Italy); Prof. Emmanuel Reynard, President of the working group on Geomorphosities of the International Association of Geomorphologists (University of Lausanne, Switzerland); Prof. Franco Salvatori, President of the Italian Geographic Society (University Tor Vergata, Rome, Italy); Nickolas Zouros, Coordinator of the European Geoparks Network (Sigri, Lesvos, Greece); Prof. Wolfgang Schlager, Professor Emeritus of Marine Geology/Sedimentology (Vrije University, Amsterdam, Netherlands); Prof. Edward L. Winterer, Geosciences Research Division (Scripps Institution of Oceanography, La Jolla CA, U.S.A.); Prof. Rainer Brandner, Head of Department of Geology and Paleontology (University of Innsbruck, Austria); Dominick Siegrist, President of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps

(CIPRA, Schaan, Lichtenstein); Michael Vogel, President of ALPARC, the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (Chambéry, France); and Guido Plassmann, Director of the Task Force Schutzgebiete (ALPARC, Chambéry, France).

⁵ For the theoretical distinction between ‘period’ and ‘epoch’ in historiography, see Johan Pot (1999, 51–52). Away from the current usage that treats the two terms as synonyms, ‘period’ stands for a span of time, in which a particular historical phenomenon revolves around a set of relatively constant cultural, social or political features; ‘epoch’, instead, is understood as a moment in time, in which such continuity arrives to its tipping point – a ‘period’, therefore, is technically defined as the span of time between two ‘epochs’. The confusion between the two terms resides in the fact that an ‘epoch’ often appears as non-instantaneous, or with a duration of undetermined length, defining moments of transition in history.

PART ONE

MATRICES OF TOPOGRAPHIC MEMORY





CHAPTER 1

The Alps and the Grand Tour

The country is such an extravagant mixture of the horrid and the tame, of the flat and precipitous, that the eye cannot hope to find anything more pleasing.

— Salvator Rosa

Writing in 1878, on the pages of the magazine *Belgravia*, in a period in which the memory of the Grand Tour was ready to become history, Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) made a prediction concerning the scenery future tourists would longingly seek during the fast approaching new century:

The new Vale of Tempe may be a gaunt waist in Thule; human souls may find themselves in closer and closer harmony with external things wearing a sombreness distasteful to our race when it was young. The time seems near, if it has not actually arrived, when the chastened sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain will be all of nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking among mankind. And ultimately, to the commonest tourist, spots like Iceland may become what the vineyards and myrtle gardens of South Europe are to him now; and Heidelberg and Baden be passed unheeded as he hastens from the Alps to the sand dunes of Scheveningen (Hardy 1920, 5).

That Hardy was wrong, in his prediction, is a fact. Tourists today may flock to Iceland, but they still highly revere the sunny 'vineyard and myrtle gardens of

South Europe'; and it would be equally preposterous to assume that those who do go to Iceland are forcibly the 'more thinking among mankind'. Why should we? In fact, by the time in which Hardy was writing, the Alps – and particularly the Swiss Alps – had already become a site so crowded with tourists that the urge to swerve away and seek for alternative destinations had become intense. And yet, perhaps not all too ready to appreciate the 'sand dune of Scheveningen', it is around this period that the discovery of the Dolomites took place, as a 'new playground' marginal to the 'old playground', largely represented by the Western and Central Alps, made retrospectively famous in 1871 by Leslie Stephen – Hardy's editor and friend, when he was writing for the *Cornhill Magazine*.

In this chapter, I shall trace the origin of the first set of symbols that allowed this 'new playground' to emerge not only as an alternative destination to the French and Swiss Alps, but also as an alternative 'community of practice', built, as I will try to show, through the recirculation of a set of interaction rituals memorably and historically attached to the Grand Tour. Following Collins' model for unravelling symbols, I single out three ingredients apposite to my discussion: the critical distinction between 'mountain gloom' and 'mountain glory', the classical idea of 'grand scenery', and the iconic notion of 'romantic rocks', framed here around the concept of 'cult geography' advanced in media studies (Hills 2002, 144-157). These three 'ingredients', to use Collins' terminology, are all allegiant, in various ways, to the ascendant appreciation of landscape art during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – an ascendancy that scholars have invariably linked to the experience of the Grand Tour (Barrell 1972, 3-5). As exposed in the introduction to this work, the Grand Tour serves here as the first matrix of topographic memory, for producing the first set of iconic symbols recirculating in the British 'invention' of the Dolomites (Chapter 4).

I am wholly aware that the focus on artistic appreciation could be understood as a partisan deviation from the way in which the ‘story’ of the relation between the Alps and the Grand Tour is ordinarily cast, through an approach sensitive to research questions that have found their most fertile ground in intellectual history or the so-called history of ideas. However, while still anchored to a distinct ‘way of seeing’, this ‘storyline’ has issued a rather biased interpretation of landscape scenery by privileging a distinct ‘way of writing’ that has obscured the ‘iconic’ framework in which the experience of the Grand Tour was historically embedded. By identifying a shift in British sensibility fostered by the aesthetic conceptualisation of the ‘sublime’, the ‘beautiful’, and, later, the ‘picturesque’, this approach has attributed greater responsibility and influence to debates that happened at home rather than to those that happened abroad.¹

By reversing here this perspective and privileging the ‘iconic turn’ attached to the artistic appreciation of landscape art as a medium for staging a ‘presentation’ rather than a ‘representation’ of natural scenery (Moxey 2008; Gumbrecht 2004; Mitchell 1995), I tend to assume here, rather than reject or rehearse, the copious documentation concerning the ‘aesthetic turn’ so intrinsically linked, during the time of the Grand Tour, to the philosophical speculations on landscape scenery that occurred in England. When I turn, for evidence, to such texts and their critics, some of them well known, it will be mainly for the sake of theoretical clarification rather than historical explanation. Landscape art, to make my hypothesis clearer, does not ‘represent’ a landscape; it rather ‘presents’ it to our eyes as a set of iconic forms, effects and impressions that cannot be reduced to ideas per se. If anything, it is the subsequent rationalization of these forms, effects and impressions that ‘represent’ a landscape conceptually through the vocabularies attached to the ‘sublime’, the ‘beautiful’ and the ‘picturesque’.

Richard Bevis, to whom I owe Hardy's passage quoted above, is perfectly aware of these two 'turns' and of the problem posed by their reciprocal influence (1999, 36). He rightly wonders about the 'weight' we should give these parallels, to finally assert that 'It is not always clear whether the issue is influence or "the spirit of the age," and, if the former, who influenced whom' (*ibid.*, 37). It is a fact, however, that 'Before Burke had published his treatise, travellers had begun to use works of art as a guide and measure for the appreciation of nature' (Finley 1979, 144); and it is equally a fact that 'Travellers and artists were being drawn to certain types of landscape well before Addison drafted his manifesto rationalizing this attraction' (Bevis 1999, 37). Rather than reproducing a story of this conceptual rationalization, I intend here to unravel the symbolic matrix of this visual attraction.

Evidently, these two facets of the problem – one heuristically qualified as 'conceptual' or 'aesthetic', the other as 'symbolic' or 'iconic' – reflect two sides of the same coin, seminal, as they are, for disseminating respectively an 'idea' and an 'image' of a landscape as a 'way of seeing', and both equally responsible for veiling the reality and prospect of 'landscape' as a 'way of living' (Olwig 2008b; Daniels 1989). For the reasons partly advanced in the introduction, this chapter will not be concerned with the latter, but it will also not take the former simply for granted. The fact is that, in exploiting the metaphors of the 'veil', the 'palimpsest' or the 'curtain' (Wylie 2007, 65–69; Bender 1998, 98; Duncan 1995, 414; Matless 1992, 41; Cosgrove and Jackson 1987, 99; Berger 1972, 41) to illustrate the mystifying action of a painted landscape ('way of seeing') over an actual landscape ('way of living'), geographers have operated a historiographical reduction of what in the same years historians, and art historians in particular, were seeking to challenge – the centrality, that is, of perspective and harmony in Renaissance art and Renaissance thought throughout the early modern period.

Back to Hardy to conclude. The questions implicit in the passage quoted above are tersely formulated by Bevis in his admirable study on *The Aesthetic of the Great in Nature*: 'What would cause such change? Why would an author or a culture turn from a classical Greek vale (Temple) to the Arctic icefields (Thule) for their images, standards, and settings? How does aesthetics, the science of the beautiful, operate after "orthodox beauty" has ceased to reign?' (1999, 4). Bevis answers these questions, implicitly 'raised by one of the foremost pioneers of modernism', by conducting his reader through a fascinating journey of both words ('ways of writing') and images ('ways of seeing') to conjure up another possible storyline of modernity – a journey from the idyllic pastures of Arcadia to the 'chastened sublimity' of Egdon Heath. Bevis identifies this 'shift in attitudes towards nature' in 'three important developments in eighteenth-century British intellectual life': 'the appearance of aesthetics as an independent branch of philosophy; an increased tendency to reverence nature as a deity; and an emerging consensus that certain kinds of topography could produce religious or quasi-religious emotions' (*ibid.*, 41). These three developments have amply been explored and shall be taken here for granted.

But are we so sure, I wonder, that Bevis' journey (in his epilogue he calls it 'excursion', *ibid.*, 327) implies a displacement or a movement from a known to an unknown place of human imagination? Are we so sure that his excursion does not imply in fact a transit 'from the same to the same' (Perniola 1985)? Is it not that Egdon Heath just another inflection of Arcadia? As we shall see here and in the next chapters, this inflection became for many travellers explicitly associated with the Dolomites. To unravel the ingredients of this association and the modalities in which this inflection took place, landscape art offers us a better toolbox than the conceptual stock of aesthetic ideas formulated during the eighteenth century. More important, it seems, is the experience associated with the discovery of natural scenery within Great Britain during the

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Napoleonic wars, when the British elite was forced to stop voyaging about the Continent – an experience that allowed Britons to recycle and apply to a different topography a series of practices and interactions they learned, experienced and absorbed during the Grand Tour.

The End of the Grand Tour

Historians of the Grand Tour rarely discuss why and how it ended.² The safest temporal span conventionally advanced defines a period between, roughly, 1600 and 1830 (Chard 1997a, 101; Chard and Langdon 1996). But while the first known account mentioning the term ‘Grand Tour’ and establishing its conventions for British travellers is the guide by Richard Lassels, *The Voyage of Italy*, published in 1670 (Kriz 1997, 88; Chard 1983; Chaney 1985), no similar document is available to mark its closure. The intractability of the question has found in qualifications such as the ‘aristocratic’, ‘conventional’ or ‘institutional’ Grand Tour a common escape. In its elitist and highly codified version, the epochal moment that put an end to the Grand Tour is supposed to coincide, politically, with the Napoleonic wars, and, culturally, with the insurgence of the Romantic sensibility; as Jeremy Black notes, ‘when tourists began to visit Italy again in large numbers from 1815, their mental world was different to that of their predecessors’ (2003, 16).³

Beyond these conventional appraisals, scholars have traced the causes for the ending of the Grand Tour well before the Napoleonic era. Ecocritical studies, for instance, have identified a crucial moment for the decline of the Grand Tour in the steady ascendancy of nature and its pictorial qualities in British eighteenth-century debates on landscape appreciation. As Christopher Hussey eloquently observed in his pioneering study on the Picturesque:

The relation of all the arts to one another, through the pictorial appreciation of nature, was so close that poetry, painting, gardening,

architecture and the art of travel may be said to have been fused into a single 'art of Landscape'. The combination might be termed 'The Picturesque'. The picturesque phase through which each art passed, roughly between 1730 and 1830, was in each case a prelude to Romanticism. It appeared at a point when an art shifted its appeal from reason to imagination (Hussey 1927, 4).⁴

During this 'interregnum' (Nicolson 1963, 25; Price 1965), between Neoclassicism and Romanticism, between Reason and Imagination, the visual qualities of nature slowly imposed themselves onto the previously dominating cosmopolitan and antiquarian conventions of the Grand Tour, opening the way for a pivotal change of one the most enduring travel practices of the early modern era. The phenomenon that marked this epochal shift from old to new landscape perception as well as from old to new travel practices, was the so-called discovery of the sublime in Nature (*ibid.*, 27).

The logic of this view seems hard to challenge: 'it was no longer necessary for a mountain, waterfall or lake to have been mentioned by Virgil or Livy to attract tourists' (Black 2003, 16). However, one could argue that the awakening of England to an appreciation of grandiose landscape was a direct result of the Grand Tour itself (Hussey 1927, 4; Leed 2001).⁵ If it is true that the new cult for wild themes such as primitive landscapes, storms at sea, hazardous passages of the Alps, spectacular volcanic eruptions or near-encounters with brigands could be seen as a clear sign of a shift in sensibility (Black 2003, 15–16; Keller 2006; Vuillemin 2007; Calaresu 1999, 140; Scaramellini 2008, 242–249), it is also true that adventure, even in its most frightening and unfamiliar dimensions, was integral to many Grand Tour travelogues (De Seta 1982, 243; Black 2003, 15; Dolan 2001). Sensations of shock, terror and disgust proliferated not only in the direct contact with natural phenomena, but also in eighteenth-century reactions to paintings and sculptures found in Italy and avidly collected in England (Chard

1983; 1996; 1999). It is questionable, therefore, to interpret the insurgence of this new sensibility as an epochal 'deviation deliberately challenging received norms' of the Grand Tour, and not, instead, as the emergence of a new 'travel style' within the Grand Tour itself and the repertoire of its multifaceted travel practices (Adler 1989b, 1368).

That in history shifts in sensibility occur is certainly undeniable. However, what is more crucial for our purpose is to evaluate the relevance of these shifts in modifying the structure of a travel practice significantly. It is evident that the basic storylines on which the meaning of the Grand Tour was founded was not drastically altered by the new philosophical trends that occurred in England during the eighteenth century; prominent families from all over Europe continued to believe in the educational role of the Grand Tour, independently from the speculations on the sublime in nature that could have taken place in London. In terms of travel practices, instead of concentrating on the philosophical debates that occurred at home, it is perhaps more profitable to look at the persistence of basic cultural dynamics that continued to condition the behaviour of Grand Tourists while abroad. Judith Adler's studies on the 'Origins of Sightseeing' and on 'Travel as Performed Art' invite us to look at the question from a broader perspective. If it true that a major shift from a touring practice based on 'the traveller's ear and tongue to the traveller's eye' and hand occurred already during the seventeenth century, the relative primacy of seeing and touching over hearing and talking was hardly threatened by an intensified experience of nature (Adler 1989a and 1989b).

The underlining narrative of the Grand Tour differs significantly, Adler maintains, from the one defining the Scholarly Tour of the previous era (Chaney 2000, 58–101), inasmuch as its protagonists are less identified with prominent people to talk and listen to than with objects or sites to gaze upon and engage with – be they of a cultural or natural kind, whereby the alleged novelty of the

latter did not erase the relevance of the former (Adler 1989b). While abroad, people continued to talk and listen, of course; but they talked and listened about a growing repertoire of diversified topics, increasingly related to what they could observe with their own eyes. In the cosmopolitan conversation that tourists could join abroad, elated reactions to nature and elated reactions to culture were blurred in a collective emotional experience in which it is difficult to identify what prevailed over what – a feeling of horror, for example, was equally felt in front a bloody painting by Caravaggio in Rome as it was by crossing the precipitous Devil's Bridge in Switzerland (Chard 1983, 5–6). As for the alleged fear of mountains, we should not forget that even for a country increasingly maritime as Britain the dangers of crossing the Alps were felt, during the entire period of the Grand Tour, as far less threatening than the ones that could emerge in a hazardous and unpredictable voyage by sea (Black 2003, 15–17; 1992, 31–32).

The neat and effective formula 'mountain gloom/mountain glory', popularized by John Ruskin and revived by Marjorie Hope Nicolson (1963), has certainly defined a fruitful path of inquiry, followed by a number of important studies (Scaramellini 2008); but it appears perhaps less tenable today than when it was firstly introduced. Critiques to this approach have been levelled by both cultural historians (Koelb 2009) and historical geographers (Mathieu 2005; Boscani Leoni 2004). Jon Mathieu (2005) distinguishes between two different schemes in the historiography of Alpine appreciation, concluding that they are neither completely false nor completely correct. The first one (periodization A) is largely informed by what we could term an ecocritical outlook; it sees the eighteenth century as the turning point from 'fog-laden and sombre' mountains to mountains that are 'luminous and magnificent', attesting Nicolson's distinction. The second one (periodization B) emerges from historical geography and the historiography of mountaineering in particular, according to

which the first positive evaluation of the Alps occurred as early as in the sixteenth century, to return into oblivion during the seventeenth and be definitely revived during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶

Distinct from Mathieu, the cultural historian Janice Hewlett Koelb (2009) sharply contests Nicolson's formula on the ground of her literary and historical reconstruction:

Nicolson is guilty indeed of glossing over the 1700 years of Gloom; of ignoring visual arts; of patronizing Cicero, Virgil, Lucretius, Dante, and Petrarch; of reducing all classical and neo-classical aesthetics to a single uncontested formula of beauty as smoothness and proportion; of dismissing the figurative mountains of earlier visionary poetry, just because they are figurative, while embracing the metaphysical conceits of seventeenth-century poets and the visionary figurations of Romantics as transparent evidence of popular taste and sentiment; and even more extraordinarily, of paying tendentious and scant attention to earlier descriptions of actual mountains: just the sort of description she so ably and carefully analyzes in the tortured and extravagant reflections of her seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britons (446).

Koelb's remarks are severe but at the same time understandable. To this I would only add – pursuing the recent suggestion to acknowledge the often-overlooked impact of weather upon practices of landscape appreciation (Brassley 1998; Ingold 2005) – that Nicolson failed to consider the ephemeral circumstances affecting the traveller's passage through the Alps. According to the records garnered by Jeremy Black (1992, 32–37), the accounts by Grand Tourists on their Alpine crossings seemed to be markedly dependent on environmental conditions: the 'gloomy' or 'glorious' reports appear to be often influenced by the climatic circumstances taking place while the tourist was in transit. No one expressed an uplifting experience traversing the mountains under a stormy weather before the nineteenth century.

In challenging Nicolson's categorical dichotomy, I tend to consider the Grand Tour as a complex matrix of topographic memories (Chard 1997a), able to generate and comprise multiple travel styles that are mutually 'coexisting and competitive, as well as blossoming, declining and recurring; ... styles whose temporal boundaries inevitably blur' (Adler 1989b, 1372).⁷ Within the same repertoire of touring practices belonging to this extended definition of the Grand Tour, I include then also picturesque travel (De Seta 1982, 241–243; Scaramellini 1996; 2008, 242–249; Buzard 1993a; 2002), together with the cosmopolitan, the antiquarian, the erudite, the satirical, the religious, the artistic, the erotic, the climatic, the folkloric, the adventurous, the romantic one and so on: all travel styles or types that encapsulate distinct touring rituals, practices and performances, often transportable and made memorable through acts of collecting, exchanging, writing, speaking, drawing, sketching and, later, photographing.⁸

It was neither the increased appreciation of nature or natural phenomena, in its Romantic or proto-Romantic manners, nor the extension of their picturesque prerogatives to other fashionable destinations, such as Switzerland, for instance (Scaramellini 2008, 53, 87), that put an end to the circulation and re-circulation of these travel rituals; but rather the increasing political unsuitability of the Italian heritage itself – fraught as it was with cultural pride and loaded with political weakness – to be elected, during the post-Napoleonic era, as a viable cultural, social and political paradigm for building a modern nation. After the unification of Italy, only few would subscribe to such lapidary statements as the one once made famous by Doctor Johnson: 'a man who has not been to Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see ... All our religion, almost all our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above the savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean' (Boswell 1970, 742; Buzard 1993b, 110). In the age of

panoramic viewing, in which the foreground was diluted in a conventional picturesque view (Sternberger 1977, 46; Schivelbusch 1987, 52–69), Doctor Johnson's statement would be better replaced by one of Anna Jameson's most quoted remarks: 'had I never visited Italy I think I should never have understood the word *picturesque*' (Buzard 1993a, 36; 1993b, 191; 2002, 47; Walchester 2007, 18). The absolute prestige of a country once valued in England as the cradle of civilization is now reduced to a repository of gestures and memories frantically diffracted in a set of individual picturesque views.

From this perspective, the end of the Grand Tour coincided with the end of Italy as the privileged source for the acquisition of a tangible and intangible repertoire of cultural fetishes that came to be recognized over time as normative indices of profit, power and prestige (Elias 2000, 45–182, 363–447; Dekker 2004, 12).⁹ But a closer look to the practice of travel during the nineteenth century would suggest that Italy ultimately ceased to act as the supreme model for harbouring such a shared heritage only when it became a Nation in the modern sense of the notion (1861). When Italy ceased to be a mere 'geographical expression' – as Klemens von Metternich famously put it – and manifested its claim to be acknowledged as one of the Nations of Europe, the superficial splendour of its cultural prestige could not counterbalance its political weakness any longer:

The close relationship between England and Italy was apparently unaltered during the twenties, as shown by the quantity of English writing on Italy and by the number of Italian refugees in England. In fact, while Italy was rapidly sinking into a state of degradation, England was becoming aware that the mere legacy of the Italian past, disconnected as it was from the present, was losing its value. Germany was the obvious, though uncomfortable alternative. There was no question of conquering Germany in the same way as Italy. The alternative was a sobering one: it paved the way to the recognition that continental Europe as it was would

not submit any more to either English or German leadership as it had once submitted to the French one. Each country, whether powerful England or dejected Italy, was gradually shrinking away from its neighbours and concentrating on its own internal problems (Dionisotti 1973, 346).

In 1870 – date of the Battle of Sedan, of the Italian conquest of Rome and the end of the Papal States, completing the unification of Italy only partially achieved in 1861 – the very structure of Europe changed radically (*ibid.* 350). The two opposing ideas driving the cultural and political discourse of the elite during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century – the liberal project of a revolution against the Ancien Régime and the conservative project of its restoration – had definitely lost their energy. Saying that the French Revolution was responsible for the end of the Grand Tour is therefore acceptable only if we consider its immediate historical consequences up to 1870. With the end of the Grand Tour, also ended the long-lasting practice of the British elite to receive a proper education by travelling to Italy – even by ‘colonizing’ it, as Dionisotti implies, in asserting that ‘the English colonization of Italy soon became a single-handed affair’ (*ibid.* 345). Also England, as all other nations, had to find its cultivating resources within its own territory and endorse its own national heritage (Colley 1992a, 171–173; Thomas 2004; Dekker 2004, 14; Lamb 2009).

The period, therefore, taken here into consideration – the historical span between the Napoleonic wars and the First World War – found in the decade from 1861 to 1871 a critical turning point. Going to Italy after this epochal point meant engaging with a beloved landscape filled with symbols of prestige (Collins 2001) whose ownership and heritage were now righteously claimed by Italy as a nation in its own right. During that decade it became hardly possible to talk about the Dolomites without acknowledging their political status, contested as they were by the Kingdom of Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Hazy

designations such as Venetian or Tyrolean Alps, once interchangeable, could no longer be used as mere geographical expressions; the allegedly neutral adoption of 'Dolomites Mountains' to qualify a picturesque tourist destination concealed in fact a debatable land contested by rival nations. Neutrality, in this context, was achieved on the ground: through the careful design of zigzagging itineraries across competing borders, in which the fantastic and picturesque scenery of the peaks overshadowed the political and social condition of the contested valleys.

Hannibal's Passage

No one would deny that one of the crucial components of the Grand Tour was classical education. Scholars are unanimous in agreeing that the Grand Tour provided a strategy for forming the British elite by exposing its members to sites of prestige, charged with a shared stock of cultural symbols. At these sites, Grand Tourists could enjoy the thrill of visiting places made famous by canonical authors and imagining themselves walking in the footsteps of the heroes they read about at home. Furthermore, the Grand Tour would allow them to see the same heroes embodied in artistic representations or theatrical performances frequently exhibited or staged in the cosmopolitan cities they visited abroad. Paris, but certainly, and in a more diversified range of locations, Italy – Venice, Florence, Bologna, Rome and later also Naples – offered Grand Tourists the opportunities of transforming the bookish education absorbed at home into a lived experience abroad, with lasting memorable consequences.

In the period of the so-called 'institutional' Grand Tour, up to the French Revolution, this exposure to classical culture was conventionally regulated by scholarly itineraries, packed with tours to artistic collections and historical monuments, as well as urbane circuits, filled with visits to the most refined salons, theatres and opera houses. Here, antiquity could be experienced both in its erudite fashion as well as in its cosmopolitan re-enactments. Past and

present coalesced in a series of rituals and performances whose unity was granted by the belief or illusion of belonging to an elitist culture of travel – a culture mediated by an iconic canon of literary and artistic images transcending national particularities.

The symbolic capital shared in these rituals spurred the feeling of being part of a transnational ‘Republic of Letters’ (Dalton 2003) – that is to say, a ‘security community’ (Deutsch 1957; Adler and Barnett 1998) – in which it was possible to freely experiment with a selected range of values, norms and symbols, allowing travellers to craft their own social identity and status in an inter-civilizational dialogue between the strong feeling of belonging to a ‘home’ and the equally strong feeling of belonging to an ‘abroad’. While abroad, these symbols were mobilized towards the construction of an aristocratic ‘community of practice’ (Adler 2009), within a safe network of ‘zones of prestige’ (Collins 2001); at home, they contributed to promote and maintain a strongly hierarchical ‘honour code’, meant to define the principles and ideals that constituted the honourable behaviour of the elite.

Towards the end of that period, the ascendancy of the appreciation of nature and natural phenomena did not alter significantly the basic premises of the Grand Tour, as a mechanism to educate burgeoning elite members and generate that particular feeling of aristocratic belonging. Nature and natural phenomena were in fact incorporated into a set of cosmopolitan rituals that included, and continued to include, also the appreciation of classical and artistic monuments to be visited in Italy – ‘Where art and nature shed profusely round | their rival wonders’, as Lady Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (née Spencer, 1757-1806), wrote, before embarking on her trip back home through the St Gotthard Pass (Foster 1898, 133). Rather than through direct contact with nature, that ascendancy was greatly mediated by the increased interest towards landscape art – highly appreciated, despite its relative lower position in the

hierarchy of pictorial genres, subordinate, as it was supposed to be, to history paintings, portraiture and genre paintings, and superior only to animal and still-life compositions (Cosgrove 1985). Staged portraits of prominent figures, disguised in historical or theatrical attire and set against an evocative landscape, offered an apposite compromise to satisfy the desire felt by so many Grand Tourists to simultaneously dwell within both past and present, culture and nature, abroad and at home.

After the Napoleonic era, however, the situation appears to be blurred. As James Black noticed, 'it was no longer necessary for a mountain, waterfall or lake to have been mentioned by Virgil or Livy to attract tourists' (2003, 16). The greater interest in mountain or wild scenery had supposedly promoted Switzerland to a destination in its own right, without the need of any mediation of a classical narrative; according to Black, 'the Romantic sensibility marked the end of the conventional Grand Tour' (*ibid.*). And yet, even Black cautiously admits that 'it would be misleading to exaggerate change' (*ibid.*); in fact, it was precisely that change of both conditions and sensibilities that transformed the old 'commerce with the classics' (Grafton 1997) into an activity of prestige that attracted travellers and ennobled their experience abroad – including in the direct contact with landscape or mountain sceneries. The old recourse to a classical reference or a classical reminiscence in front of a thrilling natural event became, actually, a strategy by which travellers could distinguish themselves from the increasing mass of common tourists drifting into the continent (Buzard 1993a, 80–154).

It is worth mentioning, in this context, the initiative that Lady Elizabeth Cavendish (née Hervey, subsequently Elizabeth Foster), Duchess of Devonshire (1759-1824), organised in 1819-1820, while already residing permanently in Rome. She engaged the most illustrious landscape painters of her time to be involved in a lavishly illustrated edition of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in the old Italian

translation by Annibal Caro (1507-1566), meant to portray Virgilian sites in their bare contemporary settings, showing that the antique dimension of Italy could be recycled and appreciated also in its existing modern outlook. Mountains, coasts and villages, mentioned in Virgil's work, preserved here their antiquarian lure, while showing their landscape features through the idealized lens of Claude Lorrain and Nicholas Poussin. Most significantly, Lady Cavendish kept for herself 150 copies, out of the 230 made, and sent them to the heads of governments and the most aristocratic families all over Europe, reinforcing and elevating the status of the Italian landscape as a 'zone of prestige', to be revered by the elite (Susinno 2009, 224–225).

Around the same time, the Alps became the locus for an enduring controversy aimed at recycling the antiquarian prerogatives of the classical Grand Tour by promoting the Swiss Alpine landscape as a historical site. Prompted by Napoleon's heroic crossing of the Alps through the Great St Bernard Pass in 1800 (Chard 1999, 195; Matteson 1980, 393–396), this debate revolved around the exact passage through which Hannibal landed in Italy about two thousand years before, in 218 BC. The debate is still alive today (Jospin and Dalaine 2011; Leveau and Mercalli 2011; Prevas 1998 and 2001); and on the basis of numismatic evidence, recent discoveries have postulated that Hannibal's itinerary could have brought him in sight of the Matterhorn (McMenamin 2012). But in the nineteenth century the focus of the considerable attention paid to the topic remained closed to the Western Alps, around Mount Cenis and Mount St Bernard (LaMotte 1739; Whitaker 1794; Wickham and Cramer 1828; Long 1831; Law 1886; Freshfield 1886, 1914 and 1924; Wilkinson 1911; Terrell 1922; Torr 1924). We are here confronted with a remarkably hybrid circulation of symbols in which the boundaries between literary, artistic, historical and natural landscapes fantastically blur (Porter

1991, 13) – this fantasy, I will argue, was nurtured and fostered by the enduring attraction to Salvator Rosa.

By this period, the paintings by Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), Nicholas Poussin (1594-1665) and his pupil and brother-in-law Gaspard Dughet (1615-1675) – sometimes confusingly known as Gaspar ‘Poussin’ – were well represented in British collections (Barrell 1972, 3–6; Ditner 1983).¹⁰ Their names had already become not only paradigms for identifying the ‘sublime’, the ‘beautiful’, the ‘heroic’ and the ‘bucolic’ landscape types par excellence – readily exploited by garden designers (Ross 2001, 36–40, and 1987) – but more significantly veritable ‘ways of seeing’ or ‘framing’ a natural landscape as a symbolically loaded scenery. The influence of their compositions was so great that they have been credited with effectively founding the ‘picturesque’ (Bevis 1999, 36; Manwaring 1925, 3–4; Ditner 1983). John Dennis, Manwaring maintained, though spiritually equipped for appreciating the sublimity of an Alpine scenery, lacked the vocabulary to articulate it until Salvator helped him to see it (*ibid.*, 5-6).

It was Salvator Rosa – rather than Edmund Burke, the celebrated theorist of the sublime – who provided British Grand Tourists with the iconic vocabulary to articulate their feelings and properly ‘see’ an Alpine scenery (*ibid.*, 5-6; Schama 1995, 456; Bevis 1999, 36–37; Ross 1987, 272). His name alone became a technical term to describe a landscape, as in Horace Walpole’s (1717-1797) famous synthetic description of his first Alpine view in 1739: ‘precipices, mountains, torrents, wolves, rumblings, Salvator Rosa – the pomp of our park and the meekness of our palace! Here we are, the lonely lords of glorious desolate prospects’ (Haggerty 2011, 55; Gold and Revill 2004, 136; Ross 2001, 38; Andrews 1999, 130; Chard 1999, 96; Nicolson 1963, 25; Hussey 1927, 95). The addition of Rosa’s name gives here an exalted meaning to a series of otherwise daunting, gloomy aspects of nature. ‘Astonished beyond expression’,

to use Malcolm Andrews' formula (1999, 129), neither Walpole nor any of his admirers could have ended that series with the name of Edmund Burke or John Addison; the proclaimed 'unpresentability' of a sublime scenery could only be made 'presentable' by recurring to another, more controllable and immediately recognisable, medium – landscape art.

Rosa's controllable and exportable 'way of seeing' was even applied to Switzerland itself. In the report of a 1774 trip in the Alps by the Bernese printmaker Johann Ludwig Aberli, specializing in Swiss sceneries, we read quite explicitly: 'On our travels it sometimes happened that both of us would cry out at the same time Salvator Rosa! Poussin! Saveri! Ruisdael! or Claude! according to whether the subjects before our eyes reminded us of the manner and choice of one or another of the masters named' (Gold and Revill 2004, 136). If we are ready to admit, then, that the mediation of Virgil or Livy was not necessary any longer to make a landscape scenery attractive, this was because seeing a landscape through the commanding mould of 'Claude' or 'Salvator' had already become so proverbial that any explicit classical justification fell redundant. It was sufficient to imagine that a scenery could have been aptly depicted by their pencils to make it worthy of seeing, writing or talking about – even in the cases in which that scenery was just a product of fantasy.

In 1775, William Mason (1724-1797) edited the poems by Thomas Gray, Walpole's Grand Tour companion (Gray 1775). In referring to Gray's ambition to thoroughly grasp the manners of the Italian masters, Mason transcribed a curious list of imaginary paintings that Gray compiled while in Italy:

When our Author was himself in Italy, he studied with much attention the different manners of the old masters. I find a proper paper written at the time in which he has set down several subjects proper for paintings, which he had never seen executed, and has affixed the names of different masters to each piece, to shew which of their pencils he thought would

have been most proper to treat it. I doubt not but this paper will be an acceptable present to the Reynolds's and West's of the age, I shall here insert it (*ibid.*, 307).

Within the catalogue of Salvator Rosa's paintings, Gray would have liked to see enlisted three pictures – or three scenes cast in a single picture – dealing with Hannibal: 'Hannibal passing the Alps; the mountaineers rolling down rocks upon his army; elephants tumbling down the precipices' (*ibid.*, 308).

We don't know whether Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) or Benjamin West (1738-1820) noticed Mason's homage; although scholars have suggested that Gray's list must have been read by John Robert Cozens (1752-1797), inspiring him to produce *A Landscape with Hannibal in His March Over the Alps, Showing to His Army the Fertile Plains of Italy* (Matteson 1980, 386, 391; Oppé 1952, 108; Leslie 1855, 263). But it certainly caught the attention of a writer who never went to the Alps, but evidently exploited their landscape as a setting for her Gothic novels – Ann Radcliffe, 'the Salvator Rosa of British novelists' (Chambers 1844, 554), 'whom the Muses recognise as the sister of Salvator Rosa' (Bucke 1837, vol. 2, 122). Pursuing the suggestion of Thomas Gray, she literally 'paints' Rosa's Hannibal in her acclaimed novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794):

The subject brought to Emily's imagination the disasters he [Hannibal] had suffered in this bold and perilous adventure. She saw his vast armies winding among the defiles, and over the tremendous cliffs of the mountains, which at night were lighted up by his fires, or by the torches which he caused to be carried when he pursued his indefatigable march. In the eye of fancy, she perceived the gleam of arms through the duskiness of night, the glitter of spears and helmets, and the banners floating dimly on the twilight; while now and then the blast of a distant trumpet echoed along the defile, and the signal was answered by a momentary clash of arms. She looked with horror upon the mountaineers, perched on the higher cliffs, assailing the troops below

with broken fragments of the mountain; on soldiers and elephants tumbling headlong down the lower precipices; and, as she listened to the rebounding rocks, that followed their fall, the terrors of fancy yielded to those of reality, and she shuddered to behold herself on the dizzy height, whence she had pictured the descent of others (Radcliffe 2001, 159–160).

The passage is often mentioned but rarely discussed by literary critics and historians of the Grand Tour (Battaglia 2007, 148–149; Heller 1980, 225; Chard 1999, 195; Heller 1980; Epstein 1969). It indeed renders quite literally the subjects that Gray felt fit for Rosa's pencil – Hannibal's crossing the Alps is stated with reference to his army, the 'mountaineers' throwing rocks at him are there, as well as the elephants 'tumbling down the precipices'. The passage is introduced as a fanciful deviation from an erudite discussion between two characters, Signor Montoni and Signor Cavigni, who in a moment of rest on the top of a cliff 'renewed a dispute concerning Hannibal's passage over the Alps, Montoni contending that he entered Italy by way of Mount Cenis, and Cavigni, that he passed over Mount St Bernard' (Radcliffe 2001, 159).

Within the fictional world of the novel, staged in sixteenth-century France and Italy, Radcliffe's protagonist, Emily, could have had the possibility to neither read Gray's wish list nor admire Rosa's art. But Monsieur St Aubert, her father, had 'taught her Latin and English, chiefly that she might understand the sublimity of their best poets' (Radcliffe 2001, 9); a 'sublimity', of course, such the one a young lady, 'exercised ... in elegant arts' (*ibid.*, 7), could have acquired through the reading of medieval romances (John Gower and Geoffrey Chaucer) and classical literature (Virgil and Livy), allowing her to fantasize about Hannibal and the 'disasters he had suffered in [his] bold and perilous adventure' (*ibid.*, 159) – a hybrid 'sublimity', in short, that would have put her in the best position to appreciate a 'ramble among the scenes of nature', preferring to 'the

soft and glowing landscape' of the plain 'the wild wood-walks, that skirted the mountain' (*ibid.*, 9).

Later in the novel, the opposition of these two types of landscapes was resolved in the picturesque view of an 'extended plain, surrounded by broken cliffs', in which Emily could imagine 'shepherds, leading up the midsummer flocks ... to pasture on its flowery summit', adding consciously 'Arcadian figures to Arcadian landscape' (*ibid.*, 158). Here Radcliffe portrays Emily as a sentimental character already equipped with the right sensibility for condensing in a unified scene *Salvator Rosa* and *Claude Lorrain*, a character, in short, ready to appreciate a picturesque landscape made of sublime and beautiful sceneries. Emulating Gray, Radcliffe's fantasy could not forbear rendering the picturesque scene of St Aubert as imaginatively portrayed by Rosa:

This was such a scene as *Salvator* would have chosen, had he then existed, for his canvas; St. Aubert, impressed by the romantic character of the place, almost expected to see banditti start from behind some projecting rock, and he kept his hand upon the arms with which he always travelled (2001, 32).

To appreciate a 'Rosa' scenery, travellers, writers and artists did not need to use a 'Claude Glass' (see Chapter 6), the slightly convex tinted mirror used by tourists, painters and connoisseurs alike to enhance the painterly qualities of a real landscape in the manner of *Claude Lorrain* (Maillet 2004; Hennig 2002, 172; Urry 2002, 147; Buzard 1993b, 20–21; Ousby 1990, 155; Adler 1989b, 22–23; Ditner 1983; Mulvey 1983, 252–254). The iconic mould of Rosa was so engrained in their minds that it was possible for writers such as Radcliffe to extract an entire 'romance' from both a real or imagined natural scenery.

It is well known that Radcliffe's ruinous description of Hannibal's passage acted as the primary source of inspiration for J.M.W. Turner's *The Snow Storm*:

Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps, finished in 1812 (Wilcox 2003, 166–167; Wettlaufer 2000; Chard 1999, 195; Matteson 1980); the painting (Fig. 1.1) counts today not only as one of his acknowledged masterpieces, but also, more importantly, as the manifesto of his art and of the so-called ‘Turnerian mystery’ (Colley 2010, 165–167). Away from Radcliffe’s ‘word-painting’, however, Turner’s visual rendering of the episode confuses the event in the whirling vortex of a snowstorm, making every details appear indistinct. Alexandra Wettlaufer has profitably exploited the indistinctiveness of this scene for illustrating the ‘law of obscurity’, made famous by John Ruskin; ‘As Turner will posit a painting that can communicate abstract ideas *without* words’, she maintains, ‘Ruskin will formulate a prose that could make a reader see, even in the absence of pictures’ (2000, 160). The same, however, could be said about Turner’s literary source, Ann Radcliffe – for she too, as I have argued above, could ‘make a reader see, even in the absence of pictures’.



Fig. 1.1 - J. M. W. Turner, *The Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*, 1812, Tate Britain, London

The fact is that Ruskin had become the ultimate reference for a particular descriptive genre known, by then, as ‘word-painting’ (Landow 1971, 232–236; 1976, 137–143; 1982, 70–71), obscuring any previous account of that practice; although Leslie Stephen, talking about the spread of ‘word-painting’ in mountaineering literature, mentions it in relation to Shaftesbury: ‘Here, for example, is a bit of what is now called “word-painting” from Shaftesbury’s “Characteristics”’ (1871, 53). What was then called ‘word-painting’, however, refers more specifically to what Richard Stein has famously identified as Ruskin’s tendency of depicting with words ‘fables of perception’, that is, stories or episodes, ‘in which an imaginary spectator travels through nature while we measure his capacity for assimilating various aspects of the “truth”’ (1975, 49). A ‘word-painting’, therefore, provides in Ruskin’s works the primary technique for constructing an imaginative episode, a ‘fable’ or a ‘romance’, which he then takes as ‘a standard for judging a pictorial representation of a scene’ (Landow 1971, 232). Although visual and not verbal in their configuration, the ‘romantic’ sceneries of Salvator Rosa functioned in precisely the same iconic way, as we shall see in the next section.

Romantic Rocks

The positive production of emotional energy in the interaction between British travellers and the Alpine scenery was fostered by another enduring symbol of topographic memory intimately connected to the appreciation of landscape art and landscape literature: the symbol, now to be exposed more in detail, of ‘romantic rocks’ or ‘romantic landscapes’ (Heringman 2004 and 2003a; Dean 2007). To broach my discussion with a hint to my conclusion, it is useful to take a look at the synthetic description of the Dolomites in the 1875 edition of Mr Cook’s *Tourist Handbook for Northern Italy*:

Latterly much attention has been called to the Dolomite Mountains, and Botzen is the station from which they are most accessible. These mountains, named after a French geologist, Dolomieu, are among the wonders of the world. They are of yellow and slaty limestone, utterly treeless, and by atmospheric and other influences have been fashioned into playing fantastic tricks before high heaven. Ruined castles, mouldering towers, weird, witch-like ravines and gorges, – everything, in short, that imagination likes to see, may be seen in this wondrous region (Cook 1875, 17).

Distinct from earlier and more detailed accounts in Murray's and Baedeker's handbooks – whose genesis and significance will be discussed in the next chapter – Mr Cook is paramount for promoting here the Dolomite region (to which 'latterly much attention has been called') as a picturesque land of 'romance'. The 'fantastic tricks' that the Dolomite landform would play before the eye of Mr Cook's tourists would instil in their imagination the thrill of being projected inside the scenery of a Gothic novel in the manner of Ann Radcliffe, in which the mountains do not feature as mountains but as 'ruined castles, mouldering towers, weird, witch-like ravines and gorges' – 'everything, in short, that imagination likes to see'.

Mr Cook sells the Dolomites to British tourists as one of the 'wonders of the world'. But the wonders of this 'wondrous region' are not 'geological' per se, despite the generic, and technically improper, account of the physical agents responsible for their bizarre formation ('the atmospheric and other influences'). They are 'wondrous', instead, because of the 'family resemblances' that inextricably link 'physical geology' to 'fantastic geology', nurturing in the mind of Mr Cook's readers the desire to inhabit either a Gothic novel or a Rosa's canvas via a 'symbolic pilgrimage' to their peaks (Aden 1999). Wittgenstein's notion of 'family resemblance' is here particularly apt to describe the incumbent

popularity of the Dolomite Mountains among British tourists (Wittgenstein 2009, 67-77).

Far from offering an early account of what we would frame today as 'geo-tourism' (Gordon 2011; Reynard, Coratza, and Giusti 2011), Mr Cook's manoeuvre chimes in fact with the production of a 'cult geography', in the sense elucidated by Matt Hills in his intriguing study on *Fan Cultures* (2002, 144–157):

Through visiting cult geographies, the cult fan is able to extend an engagement with a text or icon by extratextually 'inhabiting the world' ... of the media cult ... Cult geographies also sustain cult fans' fantasies of 'entering' into the cult text, as well as allowing the 'text' to leak out into special and cultural practices via fans' creative transpositions and 'genres of self' (*ibid.*, 151).

To be clear, what Mr Cook does here is not promoting a setting that a reader could have found already fictionalized in an existing novel or painting; what he does is exploiting the cultural capital – and the emotional energy attached to it – of a mind already saturated with affective and interpretative symbols derived from that novel or that painting, by operating what Hills calls a 'creative transposition' – an affective process that spills into and redefines material space through the activity of 'family resemblances' (*ibid.*, 148).

The Dolomites, of course, were never used as the setting for a Gothic novel or a Rosa painting – but they could have been. Their familiar resemblances with that imaginary setting presupposes the existence, at a certain moment in history, of a specific cult formation able to equip the tourist with a set of already defined symbolic and ritualistic practices that would ultimately make him or her feel at home, confirming James Buzard's maxim that 'Abroad, the tourist is the relentless representative of home' (1993a, 8). I intend here to explore the origin of that specific cult formation by looking more closely at the legacy of Salvator Rosa's 'rocky landscapes' in Britain, and their recirculation as 'romantic rocks'

(i.e. fantastic rocks that we could find described in a romance) in some Grand Tourists' accounts of their Alpine passages.

If we are ready to admit that Nicolson's psychological 'interregnum' between Reason and Imagination (Nicolson 1963, 25) – understood, in stylistic terms, as an experimental interlude between Neoclassicism and Romanticism and, in naturalistic ones, as a gestational interval between Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory – did not put an end to the Grand Tour, but instead supplied the symbolic ingredients for the formulation of a new 'subcategory' of travel style within the Grand Tour itself (Adler 1989b, 1371); we also have to admit that this period coincided – not only in Britain – with a new cult for landscape art (Romano 1978, 129–135; Hussey 1927; Manwaring 1925). This new 'cult' (Bermingham 1994, 81; Cosgrove 1984, 142–160) had been already established in Italy well before the development in England of an allegedly new 'aesthetic system' (Finley 1979, 141), based on the conceptual cluster of the 'beautiful', the 'sublime' and the 'picturesque' (Haskell 1980, 133; Romano 1978, 144). That England was seminal in nourishing this cult, in consolidating it into clear aesthetic categories and in transforming it into distinct travel practices, was rather an effect of the cosmopolitan experience of the Grand Tour, than the outcome of a naturalistic deviation from its cultural conventions.

Without indulging excessively into the details of the long disputes these concepts spurred among eighteenth-century British intellectuals and linger on the dissonant complex of oxymora grounding the new feeling of fear and exaltation, horror and pleasure, pain and joy that qualified the new emotional appraisal of natural landscape and landscape painting during the eighteenth century (Nova 2011, 125), few words need spending to clarify their recirculation in the context of the British 'discovery' of the Alps and its relation to the Grand Tour. This recirculation, I argue, finds its roots in the well-established artistic education, which was part of the Grand Tour experience

(Chard 1999 and 1983; Chard and Langdon 1996). As Gerald Finley points out, 'Before Burke had published his treatise, travellers had begun to use works of art as a guide and measure for the appreciation of nature'; but he qualifies this use as 'casual and unmethodical' – Burke 'provided travellers with a framework in which the fragile relationship between landscape and art legitimately could be strengthened' (1979, 144). The question to ponder concerns precisely the nature of this 'fragility' and the consequences of this 'strengthening'.

Current debates about the mutual interplay between the 'beautiful', the 'sublime' and the 'picturesque' dwell on the seminal connection between the emergence of a new sensibility towards nature prompted by a new appreciative response to mountain scenery (Buzard 1993b, and 2002, 43; Hipple 1957; Ross 1987; Punter 1994; Scaramellini 1996; Townsend 1997; Trott 1999; Darby 2000, 51–54; Nova 2011, 124–148). These debates, however, tend to focus – too often and in a way not limited to Anglo-American scholarship – on the textual corpus of treatises, guidebooks and poetry, discussing the role of the visual arts more or less parenthetically.

The urge to find clarity on an utterly unclear matter brought authors and scholars alike to contrive controllable definitions to conceptually disentangle a new aesthetic system – the 'beautiful', the 'sublime' and the 'picturesque' – from its two main sources of symbolic formation: landscape art and natural scenery. The novelty of this new perception envisioned a shift from 'symbol' to 'concept' – from the symbolic configuration of artistic appreciation, we could say, to the conceptual articulation of aesthetic understanding. As Wendy Joy Darby rightly summarises, 'The meaning ascribed to the word "picturesque" changed as aesthetics became more and more theorized and systematized. It acquired the definite article, becoming "the Picturesque" – joining "the Beautiful" and "the Sublime" as specific aesthetic concepts to be wrangled over' (2000, 54). We will see here, however, that this objectification can not be applied to the adjective

‘romantic’, which maintained its qualifying prerogatives throughout the nineteenth century.

Almost invariably, this new emotional response is now associated, in England, with the so-called early era of Augustan aesthetics (1700-1745) and the pivotal revaluation of ‘enthusiastic passions’ exposed in the writings of John Dennis (1657-1734; Buzard 2002, 39–40). This new appraisal rectifies a previous interpretation, according to which Dennis performed the role of a simple precursor, in the long shadow of Alexander Pope (1688-1744), Anthony Ashley-Cooper, third Earl of Shaftsbury (1671-1713), and Joseph Addison (1672-1719), viewing him as ‘providing certain answers to literary questions about imagination and sublimity’, but without ‘raising historically important cultural questions’ (Morillo 2000, 22 and 2001; Thorpe 1935; Barnouw 1983; Donnelly 2005; Delehanty 2007). Today Dennis’ ‘enthusiastic sublimity’ is rather seen as the critical key to read Edmund Burke’s (1728-1797) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beauty* (1757), the work with which the ‘sublime’ acquired its philosophical consolidation (Crowe 2012, 148–175).

Dennis – as well as all authors mentioned above – developed his pioneering theory while accounting with rapture his enthusiastic experience of crossing the Alps during his Grand Tour in Italy (1688):

In the mean time we walk’d upon the very brink, in a literal sense, of Destruction; one Stumble, and both Life and Carcass had at once been destroy’d. The sense of all this produced different emotions in me, *viz.* a delightful Horrour, a terrible Joy, and at the same time, that I was infinitely pleas’d I trembled (Dennis 1693, 133–134).

This is an often quoted except (Thorpe 1935, 465; Ashfield and Bolla 1996, 35; Bois 2000, 61; Brady 2013, 14), together with a list of poetic images that evoke enthusiastic passions – ‘Gods, demons, hells, spirits and souls of me, miracles,

prodigies, enchantments, witchcrafts, thunder, tempests, raging seas, inundations, torrents, earthquakes, volcanoes, monsters, serpents, lions, tigers, fire, war, pestilence, famine, etc.’, extending more broadly the contemporary idea of the sublime.

Rather than reflecting a direct encounter with nature, this inventory tallies in fact with the gamut of pictorial subjects that had made Salvator Rosa so beloved in England (Langdon, Salomon, and Volpi 2010; Salerno 1991; Barryte 1989; Sunderland 1973). It was the acquaintance with these uncanny and sinister imageries, often staged by Rosa in mountainous sceneries (Salerno 1991), that influenced the way in which travellers on their way to Italy could cast their Alpine crossing as a sublime experience, rather than *vice versa*. Furthermore, well before Dennis, Rosa himself rendered his own mountain impressions in a language that already encapsulated the jargon that would later become typical of the sublime. The ‘word-painting’, as we could term it in relation to what is said above about Ruskin, is surprisingly absent in the scholarly literature on the sublime; it is worth, therefore, to quote it in full:

The country is such an extravagant mixture of the horrid and the tame [d’un misto così stravagante d’orrido e di domestico], of the flat and precipitous, that the eye cannot hope to find anything more pleasing. I can swear to you that the colours of one of those mountains are far more beautiful than everything I have seen under the Tuscan sky. Your Verrucola (which I used to think had a certain horrid quality) I will in future call a garden by comparison with the mountains [Alpi] I have crossed. Good God, how many times I wanted you with me, how many times I called to you to look at some solitary hermit sighted on the way – Fate alone knows how much they tempted me! We went to Ancona and Sirolo and on the way back to Assisi over and above the journey – all places of extraordinary fascination for a painting.

Rosa's passage derives from a letter to his friend and patron Giovanni Battista Ricciardi, written from Rome, on the 13th of May 1662. It is quoted by art historians Sergio Romano, in its Italian original, and Francis Haskell, in its English translation (Romano 1978, 133; Haskell 1980, 133); but we find it already transcribed in Lady Morgan's (née Owenson, 1781?-1859) *The Life and Times of Salvator Rosa*, published in London in 1824 (Morgan 1824, 2: 338). It discloses Rosa's astonishing impressions gathered on an excursion in the Apennines, to which he generically refers as 'Alps' and 'Alpine'; Haskell rightly remarks that this excerpt 'showed how deeply felt and genuine was the romantic sentiment in his painting' (*ibid.*).

But what does 'romantic' mean in this context? We would be wrong to judge Haskell's comment as an anachronistic gesture to qualify a particular artistic expression through the recourse to a terminology usually associated to a later style, for we can easily find the word 'romantick' commonly used in England during the seventeenth century. In a study devoted to the inextricable relation between geology and aesthetics, Noah Heringman reminds us that 'as a physically descriptive adjective, "romantic" ... refers to the broken or dislocated character of the landforms ... Through its fantastic or enchanted appearance, such a landscape belongs to the genre of romance and the literary past' (Heringman 2004, 4). Addison, in 1705, defines the term by tracing its roots to literature: 'Of places: redolent or suggestive of romance; appealing to the imagination and feelings' (*ibid.*), and in this meaning is attested in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) by 1653. But already in 1659, the *OED* registers as common the use of 'romantic' to express a 'fantastic, extravagant, quixotic idea', something that goes 'beyond what is customary or practical', and is 'responsive to the prompting of imagination or fancy regardless of practicality'.

Whatever inflection we might take out from the word 'romantic' (as referring to a romance-like character, to a fantastic image, or to a bizarre form),

it becomes clear that Rosa's landscapes – both in pen and pencil – could have been easily portrayed as 'romantic' already during his lifetime. That Rosa's impressions, both written and painted, came later to be associated with a pre-romantic mood of expression is the result of the steady ascendancy of his style and motifs in subsequent periods (Salerno 1991; Patty 2005; Wallace 1965; Parks 1964; Zucker 1961). Thomas Jones (1742-1803), a painter famous for his almost photographic rendering of landscapes (Sumner, Smith, and Riopelle 2003), described in a similar vein a scenery in the outskirts of Naples in 1781: 'This sequestered place was environed on all sides, with hanging Rocks here and there protruding themselves from behind dark masses of a wild Shrubs, and overshadowed by branching trees'; but he felt that the scene, as it appeared, was missing something: 'Here is Salvator Rosa in perfection, we only want Banditti to complete the Picture' (Jones 1951, 103–104). Still in Jane Austin and John Whitehurst, the phrasing 'romantic rocks' designated the bizarre and fantastic shapes of the hills strewn about Middleton Dale in Derbyshire (Heringman 2004, 3–5).¹¹

During the Grand Tour, the exploitation of the term 'romantic' for portraying the Alps and other mountainous sceneries is abundantly attested, as a selection of quotes collected by Dennis Dean and Jeremy Black will make evident – en route to the Grand Chartreuse, 'one of the most solemn, the most romantic, and the most astonishing views' (Thomas Gray, 1739; Dean 2007, 55; Beattie 2006, 73; Nicolson 1963, 375; Anderson 1969, 17); 'The first day we travelled through a dreadful wild naked rocky country by the sides of horrid precipices ... there was something so Romantick and different from what I had ever seen before ... We had also the prospect of clouds a great way below us hovering on the sides of the mountains, which made a most Romantick appearance' (Edward Thomas, 1750; Black 2003, 29); 'some villages very romantically situated and beautiful cascades rolling and spouting from the mountains' (John Holroy, 1764, *ibid.*,

214); 'The country and mountains in Biscay are very romantic and the variety of views must ever be pleasing to a traveller' (William Beckford, 1784; Black 1992, 227).

The same employment of the term, as related to irregular shapes of landforms, is also to be found in descriptions of islands, rivers and coastlines far away from the Alps. Already in 1720, for example, Captain George Shelvocke remained speechless faced with the South Pacific landscape of Juan Fernández: 'Every thing one sees or hears in this place is perfectly romantick. The very structure of the island, in all its parts, appears with a certain savage, irregular beauty, not easy to be expressed' (Dean 2007, 55). In such descriptions, the word 'romantic' appeared so evocative that it could instil a strong picturesque feeling in the mind of a cultivated reader – as it happened to William Gilpin (1724-1804) when confronted with an account of a voyage in the Northern Seas made by a certain Captain King:

The country on each side was very *romantic*, but *unvaried*; the river running between mountains of the most craggy and barren aspect, where there was nothing to diversify, the scene, but now and then the sight of a bear, or a flight of wild fowl. So uninteresting a passage leaves me nothing further to add.

The scene captured instead Gilpin's fervent imagination; he could hardly agree with the Captain's coupling of the words 'romantic' and 'unvaried' ('he has no idea that a scene so savage could present any other ideas than such as were disgusting'). And so, playing with the literal meaning of the former, he discarded the latter: 'It is hardly possible, in so few words, to present more picturesque ideas of the horrid and savage kind. We have a river running up a country broken on both sides with wild *romantic rocks*, which we know nature never constructs in a uniform manner (as quoted in Hussey 1927, 120, italics mine).

Nature, in short, can hardly present us with a scenery that is at the same time 'romantic' and 'unvaried'.

This is certainly the case when 'romantic' qualifies 'rocks'; 'romantic rocks' continued unremittingly to configure an irregular dislocated landform before, during and after Romanticism. The page that describes the semantic spectrum of the phrase at its best derives, not by chance, from a geographical description of Matlock in Derbyshire provided by the geologist William Adam, in his *The Gem of the Peaks; or, Matlock Bath and its Vicinity* (1838). The chapter is graphically called 'Romantic Rock, or Dungeon Tors'; here it is in its slightly abridged form:

These rocks exhibit an epitome of the Dale. It may be said they bear the impress in legible and more tangible characters of those mighty causes which gave birth to it. And therefore the Geologist will best study the miniature copy before he proceeds to the larger details of the Dale itself; as he will here behold the gigantic masses in every position, just as they were torn from their parent bed. The angles exactly corresponding, so that if he could by any possibility move them back, they would fit to the greatest nicety: indeed the whole of this part from behind the Old Bath upwards, is one mass of ruin, and which cannot fail to elicit expressions of astonishment and wonder from the stranger. Let him but picture to himself millions of tons of broken fragments strewed over many acres, created at the top, just under the lofty solid cliff by these romantic rocks, detached in so extraordinary a manner, – some of them attaining the height of more than 40 feet, and apparently in the very act of being precipitated, where thousands of such masses had gone before, and he need not be surprised or alarmed if he has a sort of misgiving, that the whole is still in downward motion. It is difficult to compare them to any existing thing – they may be said to be "sui generis" – their position somewhat like the ruins of mighty pyramids. The grouping of their giant masses, exhibiting every variety of angle and feature covered to their

summits with moss and wild plants, – the graceful sycamore, ash, elm, lime, and yew tree, inserted into the lofty crag, or rising from amongst their ruins and completely overshadowing them, giving a sombre and truly romantic character to the mighty and fearful group (Adam 1838, 54).

We know that Gilpin had visited the Peak portion of Derbyshire in 1772, during the course of a tour to Cumberland and Westmoreland (Allen 1961, 55). But only occasionally was he impressed with the ‘romantic rocks’ featured in that district (‘a romantic, and most delightful scene, in which the ideas of sublimity and beauty are blended in a high degree’), which he found, quite surprisingly, unsuited for picturesque art: ‘When nature throws her wild scenes into beautiful composition; and decorates them with great and noble objects; they are, of all others the most engaging. But as there is little of this decoration in the *wild scenes of the Peak*, we left them without regret’ (Gilpin 1786, vol. 2, 222, 225).

To find the picturesque prerogatives of Matlock aptly appreciated we have to turn to theatre – more precisely to Philip James de Loutherbourg’s (1740-1812) *The Wonders of Derbyshire, or, Harlequin in the Peak*, a regrettably lost pantomime, featuring masks of the Italian Commedia dell’arte, performed in 1779 at London’s Drury Lane Theatre. The extreme popularity of the play,¹² which inspired a host of imitators, brought a ‘Derbyshire Man’ to write few weeks after its first performance *An Account of the Wonders of Derbyshire, Introduced in the Pantomime Entertainment at the Theatre-Royal, Drury Lane*, a travelogue, based on Loutherbourg’s pantomime, which ultimately promoted Matlock as a tourist destination:

Many people who have been at the pantomime entertainment, called *The Wonders of Derbyshire*, performed at Drury-Lane Theatre, having expressed a desire to have a short account of those celebrated views to

refer to during the representation, it is presumed that, (as the scenes are mostly actual portraits), the following brief description of them will not be unacceptable from a Derbyshire man. The accounts are taken from the most approved writers on the subject (Allen 1961, 56).



Fig. 1.2 - Philip James de Loutherbourg, *Set-Design for 'The Wonders of Derbyshire, or, Harlequin in the Peak'*, 1779, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

To prepare his set design (Fig. 1.2), Loutherbourg had travelled around the Derbyshire countryside taking sketches of the region (Huhtamo 2013, 96; Heringman 2004, 255; Daniels 1993, 57). But it is clear that his picturesque excursions to The Peak region were markedly influenced by the settings of Salvator Rosa, as the fantastic and supernatural plot of the play would imply (Allen 1961); Rosa's direct influence on Loutherbourg is further attested in the titles and sceneries of his paintings, such as in his *Travellers Attacked by Banditti* (1781), now at the Tate Gallery (Fig. 1.3). The intimate relation between the pictorial notion of 'romantic rocks' and the establishment of geology as a

discipline in its own right will be the topic of the next chapter. It suffices here to say that the complex chain of symbolic circulation – from the appreciation of landscape art to the appreciation of mountain sceneries – found in ‘romantic rocks’ (and its scenic exploitation) a formula that will persist up to Cook’s description of the Dolomites as a natural stage, like Matlock, for fantastic and supernatural scenes.



Fig. 1.3 - Philip James de Loutherbourg, *Travellers Attacked by Banditti*, 1781, oil on canvas, Tate Gallery, London.

Notes

¹ See, conversely and unequivocally, John Barrell: 'It is sufficient to recall here that it was, of course, during the eighteenth century that the contemplation of landscape – in nature, or as represented in literature and the visual arts – became an important interest of the cultivated; the evidence for this is widespread and immediately apparent to anyone at all familiar with the period. The source of this interest was primarily Italian: it was an interest which, it is usual to say, was brought back from Italy by young men who went on the Grand Tour, and came back *virtuosi*' (Barrell 1972, 3).

² Various reasons are advanced for the ending of the Grand Tour, including the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic wars (De Seta 1982, 260–263; 1999, 25), the Romantic sensibility (Black 2003, 16), the ascendancy of a more formalised tourist industry (Towner 1985), and the Age of the Railways (Schivelbusch 1987); a few believe it never ended (Lambert 1937; Pimlott 1947). Colley (1992) argues it was replaced by internal tourism, and Cohen (1996, 63) observes that one of the conditions for its ending occurred when self-display ceased to be coupled with transgression, and when a new 'technology for the construction of a gentleman in which his failures could remain invisible' became available; that this technology also included English mountaineering is an element often neglected (but see Hansen 1991; 2013).

³ For the theoretical distinction between 'period' and 'epoch' in historiography, see Pot (1999, 51–52) and the observations made here in the introduction.

⁴ Hussey's passage is quoted in the 1959 classic monograph by Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (Nicolson 1963, 25); in the Foreword by William Cronon to the 1997 edition, Nicolson's book is presented as one of the pioneering studies in ecocriticism (Cronon 1997, vii–viii). See also, Hitt (2004), which offers an updated review on the ecocritical approach.

⁵ Cesare De Seta (1999, 21), one of the most influential historians of the Grand Tour and one of the major contributors of the 1996 landmark Tate Gallery exhibition (Wilton and Bignamini 1996), stresses this point: 'The effect of the Grand Tour is not confined in the personal experience of the single traveller, but it becomes an essential factor for

the transformation of taste in the home country' ('L'effetto ... del Grand Tour non si resolve nell'esperienza personale di chi lo vive, ma diviene un fattore essenziale nella trasformazione del gusto dei paesi d'origine'); this transformation is achieved – De Seta maintains – through transportable items: paintings, books, engravings, coins, jewels, archaeological finds and naturalistic samples, which Grand Tourists brought back home.

⁶ The latter view is already present in one of the earliest modern histories of mountaineering (Cunningham and Abney 1887). Contesting the material assembled by Nicolson, largely constituted by 'texts of authors who were living in mountain regions only sporadically', Boscani Leoni (2004, 359) compares the 'external discourse' on Alpine landscape emerging from that corpus with the 'internal discourse' provided by local Swiss authors and their autobiographies, from the Renaissance until the twentieth century, evaluating the reciprocal influences.

⁷ The structural similarity between Adler's explanatory framework and Collins' 'Rules for Unravelling Symbols' (2004, 95–101) – already outlined in the introduction – becomes here evident. The advantage of the Adler-Collins combination allows us to devise a 'consumer-oriented' perspective, which takes into consideration not only cultural symbols or travel patterns re-circulating across different styles of interaction rituals, but also the mental dynamics (Collins' 'third circulation of symbols') by which space acts 'as a medium for bestowing meaning on the self and the social, natural, or metaphysical realities through which [the traveller] moves' (Adler 1989b, 1368). For an expansion of Adler's performative model in current tourist studies, see Jamal, Everett and Dann (2003, 157–160), who update Adler's notion of performativity with insights derived from Butler (1997).

⁸ For Grand Tour photography, see Zannier (1997) and Ackerman (2003). The list of activities outlined here would invite us to understand Adler's 'art of travel' (1989b) as an 'art of collecting' (Hinske 1986; Melchionne 1999): 'To give collecting its due is to see it as the complex world of wandering, hunting, rummaging, examining, selecting, bargaining, swapping, buying, preserving, restoring, ordering, cataloguing, completing, upgrading, researching, and displaying. (This is in no way meant to be an exhaustive list.) Collecting is less a world-denying regulation of neurotic life, than what Norbert Hinske describes as *Weltaneignung*, which roughly translates as "world-acquisition" or

“world-appropriation” and means an attitude in which one lets oneself be enchanted by the world. Collecting, for Hinske, implies an attitude of adoration, amazement, and insouciant curiosity about the world. In this way, it becomes a means of learning about and appreciating the world’ (*ibid.*, 151), in a sense not far away from Adler (1989b, 1368): ‘Performed as an art, travel becomes one means of “worldmaking” ... and of self-fashioning’.

⁹ For the lasting role of Italy in the itineraries of the Grand Tour, with particular emphasis of British travellers, see De Seta (1992), Wilton and Bignamini (1996), and Black (2003).

¹⁰ Barrell observes that the demand of such paintings ‘far exceeded the sources of legitimate supply, and the trade in imitations, copies, and forgeries was considerable ... many of the works of Claude and others were available as prints ... and “looking over prints” became a recognized way of getting through the afternoon’ (Barrell 1972, 4).

¹¹ It is highly indicative that in the arguably most influential book on British mountaineering, Leslie Stephen’s *The Playground of Europe* (1871, 53), the link between romantic rocks and Rosa’s paintings is still recalled: ‘There was even then something which went by the name of the romantic ... The correct remark to make about a bit of rough scenery, if it was not too obtrusive or too actively dangerous, was that it reminded you of Salvator Rosa’.

¹² A contemporary viewer of the pantomime expressed the following account: ‘Drury Lane Theatre. The New Pantomime Entertainment, called “The Wonders of Derbyshire; or, Harlequin in the Peak,” performed last night (for the first time) was received throughout by a brilliant and crowded audience, with the most uncommon applause, and will be repeated this Night’ (De Castro 1824, 234).



CHAPTER 2

The Laboratory of the Picturesque

Geographical experiment is called Travel. A careful and observant traveller is to the science of geography what a careful experimentalist is to other sciences. Both must approach their problem and pursue its solution in the same spirit.

— William Martin Conway

In the previous chapter, we have seen how the multifaceted experience of the Grand Tour provided British travellers with a visual grammar to appreciate the Alpine landscape and bring it back home. In this chapter, I am going to reconstruct the context of the geographical discovery of the dolomite rock and the controversial position of the so-called Venetian Alps in the geological debates of the first part of the nineteenth century. This discovery will be seminal in providing British travellers with a new picturesque toolkit to see and promote the Dolomite landscape as a new tourist destination. The ingredients, however, which made that promotion possible were neither entirely British nor entirely contained within the experience of the Venetian Grand Tour. Before being ‘invented’ the Dolomites needed to be ‘discovered’; their unique landscape features needed to be noticed before they could be seen. They needed, in short, to be put on a map.

What made them noticeable to the international community was neither a painting, nor a poem, nor a piece of theatre, nor a memorable event that happened there in ancient or recent history.¹ Those nameless mountains, variously dubbed as 'Friuli's Mountains', 'Rhætian Hills', 'Tyrolese Alps', 'Mystic Mountains', 'Pale Mountains', 'Venetian Alps' and so on, were in fact lacking a 'sponsor'. There was not a Virgil, not a Rosa, not a Louthembourg, not a Radcliffe able to instil in British travellers the curiosity to admire their peaks and explore their valleys. Nor was their district, divided as it was between different ethnic, linguistic and national boundaries, easy to reproduce on a tourist map. The British 'invention' of the Dolomites occurred, as we shall see, on the ground of their continental 'discovery'.

This chapter will retrace the development of their symbolic ascendancy during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, from the first circulation of the Dolomites in the most learned journals of the time to their second recirculation in the most popular tourist guides to the region. If the debate surrounding the 'discovery' of the Dolomites is undeniably geological in its nature and continental in its origin, the narrative subtending its 'invention' is instead markedly aesthetic and British. The common thread between these two circulations rests on the picturesque character of the Dolomite landscape itself – noticed by German geologists almost as a byproduct of their primarily scientific interest, but consciously promoted as a potentially new tourist attraction mainly by the British travel industry.

The way in which this initial promotion was subsequently exploited during the Victorian period will be the subject of Chapter 4. My main concern here is to discuss the origin of that promotion as the result of what Noah Heringman recently called 'aesthetic geology', the formula with which he identified a pre-disciplinary 'knowledge work', operating during the Romantic era, simultaneously and interchangeably active within the fields of the sciences and

the humanities (Heringman 2004; 2013; Dean 2007). Distinct therefore from the first chapter, whose main argument revolved around a landscape scenery that the picturesque voyager composed by mobilizing a set of ‘aesthetic objects’ ideally displayed in an artistic gallery, this chapter is mainly concerned with a landscape terrain that the natural explorer avidly studied by analyzing a set of ‘natural objects’ carefully collected in a mineralogical cabinet.

The distinction between ‘aesthetic’ and ‘natural’ objects, however, is here merely instrumental. Its introduction serves to satisfy the methodological need for considering, within the dual model of the so-called ‘duplicity of landscape’, a third heuristic dimension. Together with the strategies that identify a landscape as either a ‘way of seeing’ or a ‘way of living’, this chapter intends to propose a further outlook – landscape as a ‘way of inspecting’, characterised by the practices of ‘surveying’, ‘sampling’ and ‘mapping’ a given ‘terrain’. The term ‘terrain’ is borrowed here from John Barrell’s seminal study on John Clare (Barrell 1972). In Barrell’s account, ‘terrain’ is proposed as a solution to the allegedly intractable problem of defining ‘a tract of land, of whatever extent, which is apprehended *visually* but not, necessarily, *pictorially*’ (*ibid.*, 1, italics mine). Despite the limitations of the terms, ‘terrain’ is here preferred to ‘landscape’ precisely because it does not comprise a potentially ‘pictorial’ meaning, but instead refers to ‘a tract of country considered with regard to its natural features, configuration, etc.’, according to the definition Barrell extracts from the *OED*.

The distinction between two forms of ‘seeing’ that Barrell proposed here correlates in part with the two meanings of ‘landscape’ famously introduced in Dr. Johnson’s classic 1755 dictionary: (1) ‘A region; the prospect of a country’ (i.e. ‘terrain’); and (2) ‘A picture, representing an extent of space, with the various objects in it’ (i.e. landscape). As advanced in the previous chapter, this distinction has been reviewed by Kenneth Olwig to reinforce his proposal to

focus, in landscape studies, on the ‘substantive’ or ‘territorial’ nature of landscape (Olwig 2008b and 1998). According to Olwig, the first meaning identifies landscape as a ‘dominion’, referring to ‘a place, region, country, or land inhabited by people’; while the second one classifies landscape as ‘scenery’, referring to a ‘space’, rhetorically constructed through poetry, art and aesthetics (Olwig 2008b, 158).

Distinct from the previous chapter, but also from what I am going to discuss in the third and the eight ones, in which the phenomenological dimension of ‘doing’ a landscape through the practice of mountaineering will be given special consideration, I will here concentrate on the first exploration of the Dolomite as ‘terrain’, adding towards the end some observations on their aesthetic dimension and touristic exploitation by the firm of John Murray. The core of the chapter, however, is primarily concerned with geologists dealing with ‘natural objects’; objects linked to a ‘knowledge work’ (Heringman 2013) quite different from the ‘pictorial work’ analysed in Chapter 1 – a ‘knowledge work’ whose practices were intimately connected to the activities of sounding, sampling and collecting a landscape in a picturesque laboratory.

Travelling into Substance

During the second half of the eighteenth century, the culture of sightseeing, which dominated the first phase of the Grand Tour, was not limited to the urban environment and its cosmopolitan attractions; nor was the appreciation of nature anymore mediated by the knowledge of landscape art. The travel to the Mediterranean shores was still firmly linked, as in Dr Johnson’s time, to the educational need of becoming a gentleman; but the kind of literacy required to embark on such a journey was not only attached to classical erudition. Italy certainly continued to be perceived as the land able to provide a refined urban experience; but the preparation needed to make such experience as fruitful as

enjoyable comprised also different kinds of knowledge. The gallery and the library, as the two indispensable 'laboratories' for acquiring that knowledge, were increasingly complemented by naturalistic cabinets, expanding the repertoire of available 'traveling landscape-objects' (Della Dora 2009) to the world of 'actual' nature.

Galleries, already filled with specimens of painted landscapes, in the manner of Rosa, Claude or Poussin, increasingly included optically accurate *vedute* by artists such as Canaletto, Marco Ricci, Gaspard Van Wittel, Andrea Locatelli, Hubert Robert, Adrien Manglard or Claude Vernet (Fino 2011; De Seta 1999; Briganti 1966). Libraries welcomed illustrated books, often with hand-coloured plates, glossing personalized itineraries and pictures taken from the Grand Tour; but also books of voyages and discoveries in far-off lands as well as ethnographic accounts of so-called primitive cultures (Grafton, Shelford, and Siraisi 1992; Findlen 1994). Cabinets of curiosities increasingly assembled collections of natural objects, which were not only limited to fossils, minerals or rocks, but comprised also archaeological, ethnographic, botanical and zoological specimens (Blom 2003; Hamblyn 1996; Pomian 1990; Price 1989; Vaccari 2011; Schweizer 2007).

Possessing nature was still part of the old antiquarian endeavour of possessing the past (Heringman 2013; Findlen 1998). However, distinct from the practice of collecting paintings or books, 'natural objects' and 'past objects' retained the signature of the concrete sites from which they had been extracted – sites that could be easily placed on a map. Their combination with maps transformed their geographical matrix into a memory that became more and more tangibly topographic. The old rhetorical concept of *topos* is given here a franker spatial dimension; and it is this dimension that would allow these objects to be dubbed as 'scientific' (Daston 2004).



Fig. 2.1 - Pietro Fabris (active from 1740 to 1792), (from left-top to right-bottom), *View of Naples from seashore* (Vol. 2: Plate 4), *Mt Vesuvius* (Vol. 2: Plate 7), *Stratum of lava* (Vol. 2: Plate 8), *Excavating the Temple of Isis Pompeii* (Vol. 2: Plate 41); *Crater of Mt Vesuvius* (Vol. 2: Plate 9), *Eruption on Mt Vesuvius 1767 October 20* (Vol. 2: Plate 6); *Rock specimens from Mt Vesuvius* (Vol. 2: Plate 48); *Specimens of volcanic rock* (Vol. 2: Plate 43); *Marble and rock from Mt Vesuvius* (Vol. 2: Plate 50); *Specimens of lava from Mt Vesuvius* (Vol. 2: Plate 49). From Hamilton and Fabris 1776.

Lorraine Daston claims that scientific objects come into being when surrounded by an established cultural discourse: 'they become more richly real as they become entangled in webs of cultural significance' (Daston 2000, 13); Bruno Latour, instead, argues that 'scientific objects' possess an intrinsic agency, prior to discourse, through which the boundaries between mediated and unmediated constructions of meaning significantly blur (Latour 2000, 253). Away from this quarrel, I propose here, instead, to consider these objects as 'pre-scientific' or 'antiquarian', as the products of an epistemological pursuit in which past and present could coalesce.

In the case of 'antiquarian objects', the conflation of time and space occurs on a common ground, in which history collapses into geography (Baker 2003). Rather than following Michel Foucault's theory of the discontinuity of living forms, originated in 'the fragmentation of the surface upon which all natural beings had taken their ordered places' (Foucault 1970, 275) and therefore identifying the issue within an ontological discourse that would replace 'natural history' with a 'history of nature', the eighteenth-century scientific cabinets urge us to consider more closely the tight naturalist-antiquary's way of working. As Noah Heringman rightly points out, eighteenth-century collectors of *naturalia* 'seem to have operated in both phases of the Foucauldian epistemic shift at once, collecting plants and animals under the aegis of Linnaean natural history and artefacts under the sign of a proto-ethnographic antiquarianism' (Heringman 2013, 43).

The practice of collecting the past – be it the past of history or the past of nature – was connected with travel. As William Martin Conway (1856-1937), art critic, politician, cartographer and mountaineer, would say in a later time, 'Geographical exploration is the investigation and record of the form of the earth's surface in its relation to man ... Geographical experiment is called Travel' (Conway 1894b, 736). Conway is here de facto recycling the old style of

travelling I am trying here to capture; his multifaceted personality and interest aptly convey the image of pre-scientific travelling as performed by first modern explorers a century earlier. In this context, the first encounter with the Dolomite landscape was attached to modes of travel that were gradually moving away from the conventions of the Grand Tour to become more frankly scientific. The perfect combination of art, science and history was provided by Pompeii (Fig. 2.1), and its historical and geological attractions (Hales and Paul 2011; Hamblyn 1996; Heringman 2013, 77–124; 2003b).



Fig. 2.2 - Jacques François Joseph Swobach-Desfontaines (1769-1823), *Specimens of Minerals*, watercolours, 1791, Mineralogical Library of the Natural History Museum, London.

Collecting minerals, however, was a well-established practice already during the eighteenth century, and as such it paralleled the collecting of fine art (Hamblyn 1996). Information about mineral cabinets also circulated through drawings or coloured prints, in which the name of the collector prominently featured (Fig. 2.2). The Mineralogical Library of the Natural History Museum in London holds an exquisite collection of watercolours drawn in 1791-92 by Jacques François Joseph Swebach-Desfontaines (1769-1823) to illustrate the continuation of Jacques Fabien Gautier d'Agoty's (1717-1785) *Histoire naturelle, ou, Exposition des morceaux, les mieux choisis pour servir à l'étude de la minéralogie et de la cristallographie*, which remained unpublished. It is mentioned here not only to exemplify the kind of range and arrangement of this material, but also to underline the importance of colour in these sorts of assemblages; the mastery of colour, as we shall see, was seminal not only to illustrate the differences of minerals, but also to offer an image of the kind of 'voyage into substance' implied by this sort of endeavour (Stafford 1984).

The remarkable plates reproduce sixteen minerals each, accompanied with explanatory notes, featuring the collection from which they have been copied. Specimens of fluorite, for instance, came from Northumberland (Jacob Forster's collection); prehnite from Cape of Good Hope, in South Africa (Gigot d'Arcy's collection); aquamarine from Russia (Mr Aubert's collection); a leaf of gold on matrix from Transylvania (Gaspard Caze de la Bove's collection); emerald from Colombia, autunite from Saxony, zinnwaldite from Bohemia and so on. Through the possession of these specimens, coming from all parts of the world, collectors could entertain the fantasy of travelling worldwide by admiring their specimens housed in their cabinets. Those who did travel could find on the road a burgeoning local market of mineral specimens; those who could not travel had the specimens sent to them. The practice of collecting this kind of material went hand in hand with the practice of touring the continent (Hamblyn 1996).

During the second half of the eighteenth century, together with the establishment of several important natural history societies, flourishing alongside the more heavily aristocratic Royal Society (Allen 1994, 39–43), the collection and circulation of mineral specimens encouraged also a geologically oriented tourism (Heringman 2004, 15–16). Richard Hamblyn has convincingly shown that ‘there was an expansion of the franchise on natural knowledge’, accompanied with a remarkable number of non-technical mineralogical publications accessible also to unspecialised middle-class people; the considerable proliferation of this kind of writing, according to Hamblyn, is a clear sign of the importance of the industry-tourism nexus in setting the agenda for earth sciences (Hamblyn 1994, 86).

From an educational perspective, the prodigious collection assembled by the German geologist Abraham Gottlob Werner (1749-1817) at the Freiberg School of Mines, in Saxony, counting 100,000 samples of rocks, stones and ores, stands as a paramount example of the function these collections assumed as a primary tool to identify and classify the sources of minerals by region and mine (Greene 1982, 34–35).² The information that minerals could offer to the experienced observer was first and foremost a practical one, allowing for the formation of an empirical but effective knowledge for locating, on a given territory, precious minerals to be economically exploited. But the system Werner created was so successful, despite its theoretical shortcomings, that his influence was revered not only within the industrial sector but also within the touristic one (Guntau 2009; 1984; Greene 1982; Laudan 1987; Ospovat 1967; Haberkorn 2004). His authority as well as the one of his pupils soon spilled out from the learned journals into travel books.

To this purpose, Werner defined more than fifty colours and an equal number of physical characteristics exemplified in his collection of rocks, developing a method for their individual classification that, despite its

discursiveness and cumbersomeness, 'was, in his time, the most powerful tool yet devised for the identification of minerals in the field' (Greene 1982, 35; Syme 1821; on Werner's colour system, see Jameson 1811; Schäfer-Weiss; Jones 2013, 234-242). The effectiveness of Werner's method was responsible for its application in South America by Alexander von Humboldt, in Denmark and Norway by Henrik Steffens, in North America by Benjamin Silliman, in Scotland by Robert Jameson, and nearly everywhere by Leopold von Buch – including, as we shall see, the Dolomite region. The figure of Werner and his influence in steering the disciplinary turn from mineralogy to geology (Laudan 1987) is absolutely crucial for understanding the discovery of the Dolomites.

The eighteenth century did not know geology as we understand it today. The study of the configuration of the Earth's crust and mantle was considered pertinent to established disciplines such as cosmology, meteorology, mineralogy and chemistry, disciplines which only later would represent internal articulations of geology as a science, and which, in that period, were still generically linked to natural history and natural philosophy (Rappaport 1997; Oldroyd 1996; Gohau 1990; Laudan 1987; Porter 1977; Rudwick 1972). In addition to this pre-scientific approach, the phenomena associated with the transformation of the Earth's surface were also studied in the humanistic context of secular and sacred history, which included chronology and antiquarianism (Heringman 2013; Bedell 2009; Gould 1987; Ogden 1934). Crucial information on those phenomena was also provided by a third area of inquiry – the practical investigation of land prospectors and mine officials (Vaccari 2000; Rudwick 1996; Hamblyn 1994; Ospovat 1967). It is in the context of the latter that Werner's theory on the formation of the Earth emerged.

Towards the last part of the century, these three matrices of knowledge – the natural/physical, the historical/erudite and the practical/exploitative one –

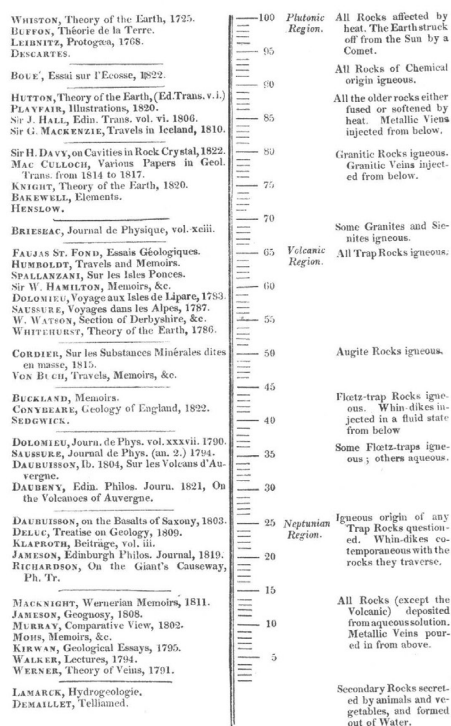
coalesced into a composite field of investigation that would eventually consolidate into the discipline of geology not earlier than in the third decade of the nineteenth century (Greene 1982). The centrality of the Alps in this emancipation of geology as a science is without question (Ciancio 1999); but the study of their origin and composition, so crucial to understand the origin and composition of the Earth itself, was conducted, during that period of gestation, from multiple and competing perspectives, all distinctly allegiant to their own methods and their own ideological agendas. In this respect, as it has been recently pointed out, the influence on the scientific inquiry of the aesthetic theories of the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque gained a particular ascendancy towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century (Heringman 2004; Dean 2007).

Historians of geology have identified four main areas of investigation active during this period: (1) mineralogy or the natural history of minerals; (2) physical geography or mineral geography; (3) geognosy ('knowledge of the earth') or the identification of the order, disposition and relation of the different layers forming the Earth, based on the Neptunian framework elaborated by Abraham Gottlob Werner (1749-1817); and (4) the so-called 'Theories of the Earth' or theories with which natural philosophers tried to challenge the ancient cosmogonical tradition of the Renaissance (Chartier 1998; Rappaport 1997; Rudwick 2009; 1996; 1972; Laudan 1987; Roger 1973). Natural scientists considered these approaches neither as mutually exclusive nor as possessing different degrees of epistemological validity; in theory, the pioneers of geology might have associated themselves with one of them, but in practice they tended to combine them more or less idiosyncratically.

The Laboratory of the Picturesque

GEOLOGICAL THERMOMETER,

Shewing the Opinions attributed to various Geologists with respect to the Origin of Rocks.



Munday and Slater, Printers, Oxford.

(376)

ART. XXVI.—Geological Thermometer, shewing the Opinions attributed to various Geologists with respect to the Origin of Rocks.

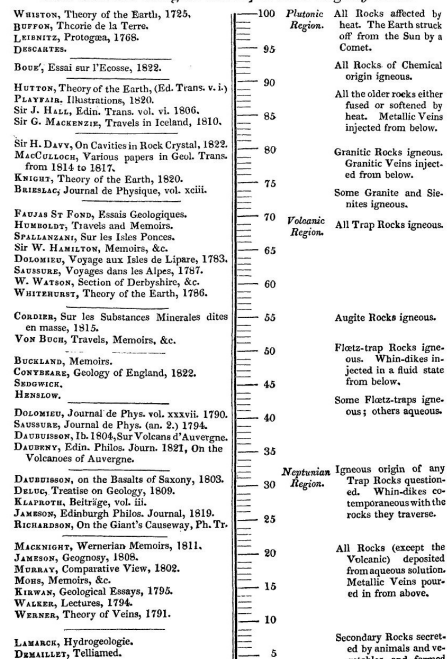


Fig. 2.3 - Left: Charles Daubeny (1795-1867), *Geological Thermometer*, 1822, Oxford University, Museum of Natural History, J. Phillips MSS, Box 78. Right: William Buckland (1784-1856), *The Geological Thermometer*, in *The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* 7 (1822) 376.

These four areas allow us to locate the laboratory of the picturesque onto the map of geology. Within this laboratory, concrete natural objects, rather than ephemeral aesthetic ones, were charged with additional emotional energy linked this time to a 'knowledge work' aimed primarily at solving some geological riddles that the combination of dolomite and porphyry in the Dolomite district posed to the international community. The variety of theoretical frameworks proposed to tackle these riddles are graphically enlisted in William Buckland's 'Geological Thermometer, shewing the Opinions attributed to various Geologists with respect to the Origin of Rocks' (Fig. 2.3), based on an idea by Charles Daubeny (1795-1867) and published as early as in 1822 in *The Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* (Buckland 1822; Torrens 2006,

190–191). Buckland's list provides a fairly accurate description of the international dimension of the debate, aptly arranged along what we could call today a thermodynamic axis – from the coldest to the hottest 'regions' of the theoretical discussion.

The thermometer also reveals a hidden hierarchy, highlighting the three theories that were more widely discussed – so-called neptunism, volcanism, and plutonism, giving to the latter more prominence. At one extreme, neptunists (i.e. Werner's followers) believed that rocks were formed in water, from the crystallisation and sedimentation of minerals in the early Earth's oceans; at the other end, plutonists maintained that their formation was the result of the action of heat located in the centre of the earth; volcanists aptly occupied the middle ground – often the two last theories are treated as overlapping (Baker 1998; Candela 2009; Greene 1982). It is however significant that by 1822 Humboldt (69°) and von Buch (51°), both pupils of Werner (11°), are clearly portrayed as progressively moving towards the 'Plutonic Region' (Heringman 2004, 143). It is in this middle region that the debate on the Dolomites emerged.

It is useful to outline the stages of the geological discovery of the Dolomites in a different way from recent well-informed accounts tailored to a wider audience (Wachtler 2005; Avanzini and Wachtler 1999). More profitable than these are the contributions by Luca Ciancio, Luigi Zanzi, Enrico Rizzi and Ezio Vaccari, who are particularly keen to include the discoveries of local scientists within the international debates on the origins of the Alps. The role of the Dolomites in these debates constitutes a chapter that British and American scholarship has largely neglected. The picture that emerges from these studies (Ciancio 1999 and 2005; Zanzi 2003; Rizzi 2003a and 2003b; Vaccari 1992 and 2000) is one of an intense and complex dialogue between Italian scientists – still imbued with antiquarian erudition but well-aware of the scientific debates in Britain and the rest of continent – and the international scientific community.

In the introduction to the first edition of her rightly acclaimed Dolomite book, *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys: A Midsummer Ramble in the Dolomites* (1873), Amelia B. Edwards observed that the district she was about to promote as a new fashionable ‘playground’ for British travellers (see Chapter 4) had once attracted the curiosity of only a few scientists:

Till the last six or eight years – that is to say, till the publication of Ball’s Guide to the Eastern Alps in 1868, and the appearance of Messrs. Gilbert and Churchill’s joint volume in 1864, – the Dolomite district was scarcely known even by name to any but scientific travellers. A few geologists found their way now and then to Predazzo; a few artists, attracted in the first instance to Cadore, as the birthplace of Titian, carried their sketch-books up the Ampezzo Thal; but there it ended (Edwards 1873, vii).

What is interesting in this passage is the combination of scientists and artists that the Dolomites had been able to attract before Edwards’ journey, as well as the perceived hiatus between two distinct epochs she implicitly evokes – the epoch of their scientific ‘discovery’, following the discovery of the dolomite rock by Déodat Gratet de Dolomieu and Nicolas Theodore de Saussure (Zanzi 2003; Rizzi 2003b), and the epoch of their touristic ‘invention’, thanks to the publication of Gilbert and Churchill’s *The Dolomite Mountains* (1864) and Ball’s famous *Guide to the Eastern Alps* (1868).

If the artists mentioned by Edwards remain nameless (see here Chapter 6), the name of the ‘few geologists’ who found their way to the Fassa Valley are revealed in the section she devoted to the hotel Nave d’Oro in Predazzo, at which she stayed (Fig. 2.4):

Their visitors’ book is quite a venerable volume, and contains, among the usual irrelevant rubbish of such collections, the handwriting of Humboldt, Fuchs, Richthofen, Sir Roderick Murchison, the Elie de Beaumonts, and other European celebrities (*ibid.*, 283).



Fig. 2.4 - The Albergo Nave d'Oro, of Francesco Giacomelli, in Predazzo, in a 19th-century photograph, SAT Archive.

Edward's synthetic list avoids giving Germans their merit – the first discovery of the Dolomites is portrayed as a Continental matter; but it is also portrayed as matter attached to a particular portion of the Dolomite Mountains, located in the Italian Tyrol, or Trentino.

What is more interesting, at this point, is that Predazzo is described as 'attractive to geologists and mineralogists', but unsuited to the 'unscientific visitor' ('Leaving Predazzo after one day of rest – for, however attractive to geologists and mineralogists, it has no excursions to repay the unscientific visitor', *ibid.*, 284-285). Edwards' geological remarks assume here the tone of a digression on the glories of a local heritage that was once global.³ From her touristic and recreational perspective, the list of prominent names recorded on the Nave d'Oro's visitor book (Fig. 2.5) could provide clues only to the historian of geology (Vardabasso 1950). There is a hiatus, therefore, between the

‘discovery’ of the Dolomites and their touristic ‘invention’; a hiatus that we will better explore at the end of this chapter.

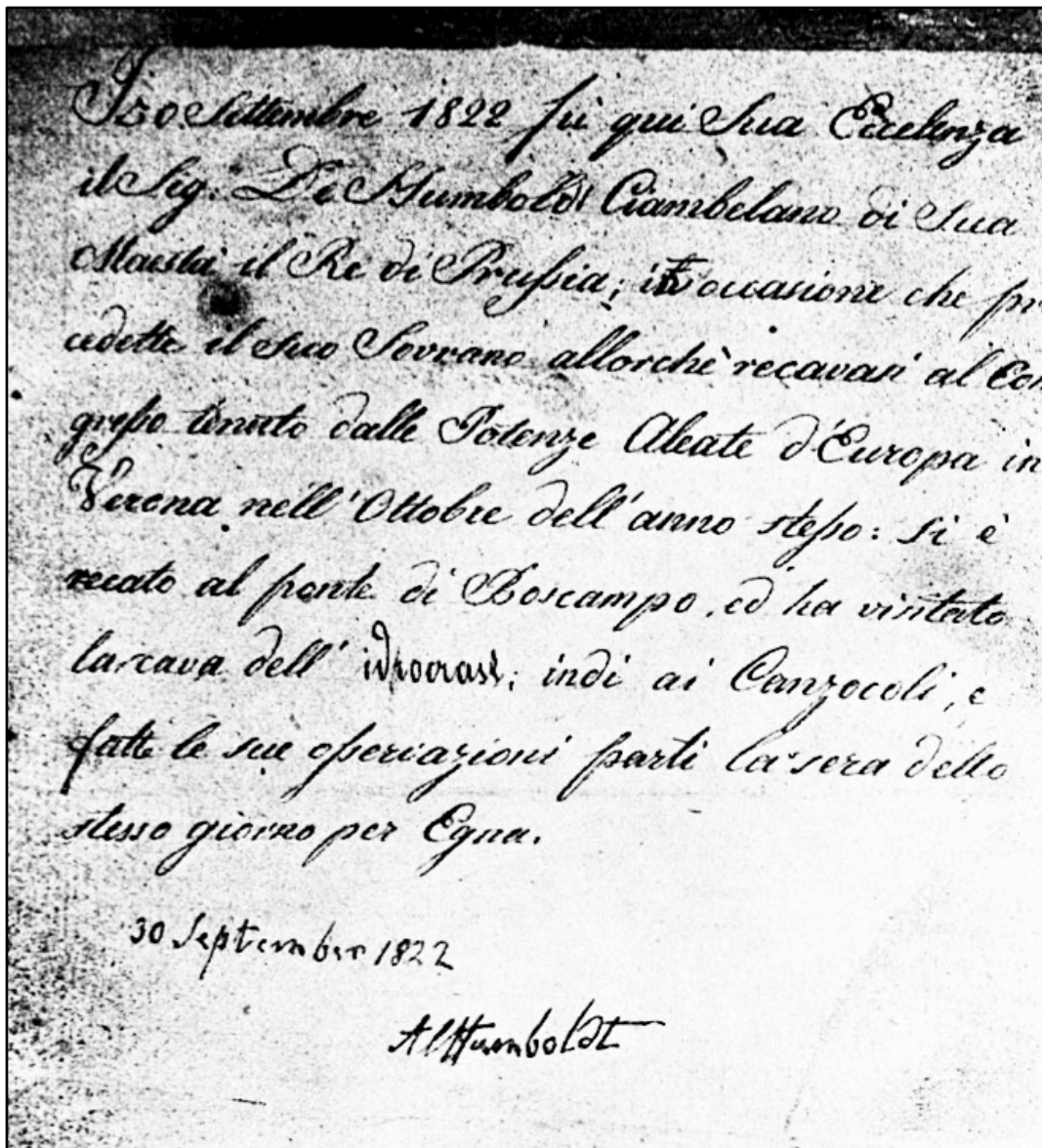


Fig. 2.5 - The first page of the visitor book of the hotel ‘Nave d’Oro’ in Predazzo with the signature of Alexander von Humboldt, dated 30 September 1822, Nave d’Oro Hotel Archives.

Before keying into the geological riddles that made of Predazzo the starting point for the first discovery of the Dolomites, however, it is useful to look at the ‘irrelevant rubbish’ that Edwards found not so much in the distinguished visitor book of the Nave d’Oro she consulted but in the hotel’s picturesque cabinet of local curiosities:

The Nave d'Oro (without disparagement of the inns at either Caprile or Primiero) was undoubtedly the best albergo we came upon during the whole tour. The house is large, clean, and well-furnished; the food excellent; and the accommodation in every way of a superior character. The landlord – Francesco Giacomelli by name – is a sedate, well-informed man; a fair mineralogist and geologist; and proud to tell of the illustrious savants who have from time to time put up at his house and explored the neighbourhood under his guidance. He keeps collections of local minerals for sale, among which the orthoclase crystals struck us as being extraordinarily large and beautiful (Edwards 1873, 281–282).

Edwards' interest is not for geology. Her curiosity is here entirely absorbed by a small bronze bracelet of Etruscan origin found in the area together with a series of other similar objects. A Viennese antiquarian had bought the little treasure right after its discovery; but the bracelet, 'being accidentally mislaid, had escaped the Viennese collector' and was bought by the author (*ibid.*, 282). The occasion spurred Edwards to inform her readers of Ludwig Steub's (1812–1888) theory on the unity of the Etruscan and the Rhaetian languages, and on the ethnic link between the people of Tyrol and the Etruscans (Steub 1843), showing once more that tourism in the region was driven then by historical and aesthetic concerns rather than geological ones.

The names mentioned in the Nave d'Oro visitor book are in fact illustrious testimonies of the role played by Trentino, and Predazzo in particular, in the establishment of geology as a science (Ciancio 1999 and 2005; Avanzini and Wachtler 1999; Wachtler 2005). The task of reconstructing the geological contribution to the discovery of the Dolomites, therefore, is equal to an inquiry about the importance of Predazzo for the scientists who went there. We will also see that it was not the dolomite rock per se that attracted so many 'European celebrities' to the Fassa Valley, but its stratigraphic relation to the surprisingly vast mass of porphyry to be found in the region – a relation that

threatened to overturn the most accredited theories on the Earth's formation of the time and, in particular, Werner's influential neptunian explanation.

Up until the second decade of the nineteenth century, botany still represented the main drive for continental scientists to travel in the Dolomite region – especially in the area around Monte Baldo, made famous in the sixteenth century through the studies by Francesco Calzolari (Ciancio 1999, 208–210; Albanis Beaumont 1792, 27–33).⁴ Before, during and immediately after the Napoleonic era, the botanical interest in the region became increasingly associated with mineralogical, geological and paleontological concerns, culminating, most famously, in the controversial discovery of the dolomite rock by Déodat Gratet de Dolomieu and Nicolas Theodore de Saussure (Gaudant 2005; Rizzi 2003a and 2003b; Zenger, Bourrouilh-Le Jan, and Carozzi 1994; McKenzie 1991; Wachtler 2005, 140–142; Fournet 1847).

Dolomieu's concrete contributions to the mineralogy of the Dolomite rock had been surrounded by a mystery until the recent discovery of his travel diaries by Enrico Rizzi (2003a and 2003b). Rizzi amply demonstrated that the French geologist not only spent considerable time in the actual Dolomite region, against previous accounts that saw him visiting only the bulks of porphyry in the Val d'Adige, but that he also performed the first chemical experimentations in situ, showing that the dolomite was behaving differently to acid than normal limestone. According to Rizzi's newly discovered material, Dolomieu was attracted to the Dolomite region by the studies of Giovanni Arduino (1714–1795), Giovanni Antonio Scopoli (1723–1788), Alberto Fortis (1741–1803), and most significantly Belsazar de la Motte Hacquet (1739–1815), a travelling physician, regarded today as the first discoverer of the dolomite rock (Kranjc 2006, 167 and 2003; Lunazzi 2010; Fig. 2.6); unaware of this Judith McKenzie attributes instead this discovery to Arduino (1991).



Fig. 2.6 - Heinrich Müller, *Erste Tafel*, worauf das hohe Kaltgebirge, aus Schichten bestehend, mit der Gallmeygrube von Auronzo im Cadorinischen von der Südseite vorgestellt ist, 1785, in Hacquet 1785, Part 1, Plate 1, Lausanne, Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire.

It is less interesting here to rehearse the discovery and later dissemination of its results by Dolomieu and Saussure from a mineralogical point of view (*ibid.*); we could remember synthetically that ‘Dolomieu felt it was Saussure’s choice to name the rock and humbly accepted the name proposed in his honour’ (Purser, Tucker, and Zenger 1994, 27; Geikie 1905, 254, 260; Rizzi 2003a and 2003b; Zanzi 2003). More crucial for our purpose are two little-known reports made in 1819-20 by Count Giuseppe Marzari Pencati (1779-1836, see Ciancio 2008), from Vicenza, concerning the geological strata observed in the Fassa Valley – ‘Cenni geologici e litologici sulle provincie Venete, e sul Tirolo’ (1819) and ‘Notizie sopra un granito in massa sovrapposto, in giacimento discordante, al calcare secondario’ (1820). To understand their importance in the European

debates of the time, it is crucial to stress, once again, the dominant role played by the method established by Abraham Werner in those years, the eminent professor and mine inspector of the Freiberg *Bergakademie*.

At the cusp of the nineteenth century, the German idea of landscape was linked to a particular inflection of romanticism that sought to unite art, science and natural law under the all-encompassing notion of *Umwelt* or 'environment' (Olwig 2002, 166; Dean 2007; Guntau 2009). This holistic framework found in the teaching of Werner and the by him directed Freiberg School of Mines, in Saxony, its geological matrix (Laudan 1987, 87–113). Following the neptunian theory of the Earth's formation, Werner was concerned with the distribution of rock masses composing the stratified parts of the Earth's crust, and founded its study as 'geognosy' (Werner 1786; Ospovat 1967; Greene 1982; Guntau 1984; Laudan 1987; Rudwick 2005, 84–99). Prominent among geognosists were Alexander von Humboldt and his friend Christian Leopold von Buch (1774–1853) – both students of Werner at Freiberg; but also intellectuals such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) can be counted as his followers (Haberkorn 2004; Engelhardt; Schweizer 2007; Bunkše 1981; Bernard Debarbieux 2009; van der Plaat 2009; Klein 2012; Kwa 2005; Minca 2007b; Farinelli 1991; Coleman 1963).

If Goethe, travelling in the 'limestone Alps' before Dolomieu, in 1786, could only exclaim: 'They have a grey look and beautiful strange, irregular forms, although the rock also splits into layers and beds. But as you also get twisted layers and the rock in general, the peaks have a strange appearance' (Goethe 1999, 16); Humboldt, in describing the beauty of these mountains as primarily related to their geological phenomena, compared them to the mountainous backgrounds painted in the art of Leonardo:

In Fassathal, the dolomite rises perpendicularly in the form of smooth walls of dazzling whiteness to the height of several thousand feet. It

forms pointed conical hills, which stand side by side in great numbers without touching one another. Their physiognomical character brings to mind that sweetly fantastical mountain-landscape with which Leonardo da Vinci has ornamented the back-ground of his portrait of Mona Lisa (Humboldt 1845, 1: 280).

It is known Leonardo had a great 'significance as a pioneer of geological thought and practice' and that the geological features of his landscapes anticipated many of the theoretical developments in modern stratigraphy (Branagan 2006, 31, 41; Baucon 2010; Vai 1995; Vai and Caldwell 2006; Giglia, Maccagni, and Morello 1995; Freshfield 1884). The aesthetic and philosophical sensibilities of such 'humanistic geology', or 'aesthetic science' (Heringman 2004 and 2003a), suggested by Humboldt's reading of Leonardo's Mona Lisa background, could have added further sparkle to a landscape that was about to attract the first foreign travellers to the Dolomites.

The actual fact, however, is another one. Through a letter by von Buch addressed to Humboldt (1822) and promptly published in the Parisian *Annales de chimie et de physique* (1823), von Buch provided the international community with the first scenic description of the Dolomite landscape, based on geomorphological observations and accompanied by a geognostic map (Fig. 2.7) of the eastern district of Trentino (Buch 1823a; Ciancio 2005, 246, and 1999). Von Buch's letter exposed more widely the results of his survey in Trentino, previously illustrated locally to Alois von Pfaundler (Buch 1877a [1821] and 1877b [1822]), inspector of the region for the Austrian Empire, who had consulted von Buch to receive further elucidations on the puzzling geological observations made, some years before, by Giuseppe Marzari Pencati, in the area around Predazzo. The matter-of-factness of Marzari Pencati's observations threatened to subvert Werner's standard succession of the rock strata (Ciancio

1999, and 2008), orderly linked to the periods of geological time – the oldest periods were positioned at the bottom, the most recent ones at the top.



Fig. 2.7 - Leopold von Buch, *Esquisse d'une carte géologique de la partie orientale du Trentino*, 1822.

To defend Werner's authority, von Buch mobilized Humboldt. And the letter to him, promptly published in Paris, was followed by the publication of two lengthy lectures on the same topic, read at the Königlische Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin (1822 and 1823, see Buch 1823b). Without entering in the details of the diatribe spurred by Marzari Pencati's discoveries (Marzari-Pencati 1819 and 1820; Avanzini and Wachtler 1999, 140–143; Ciancio 1999; Greene 1982, 62–121), it suffices here to notice that the

scientists who soon flocked to the area were certainly not insensitive to the Dolomite landscape scenery, as made clear in von Buch's accompanying his letter:



Fig. 2.8 - Leopold von Buch, *Esquisse d'une carte géologique de la partie méridionale du Tyrol*, 1822, published in the *Annales de chimie et de physique* (1823).

So far, no naturalist has ever set foot in the Fassa valley without being taken aback by the sight of the high, white and jagged rocks, which, from every side, surround this strange and interesting valley. Its vertical bastions take the form of obelisks and towers of such beauty that nothing like that exists anywhere else in the Alps. Smooth rock faces rise vertically several thousand feet high, thin and detached from other

peaks, looking as if they had stuck out from the ground in great numbers. Often, they look like frozen waterfalls, whose long icicles have been turned upside down and are now pointing upwards. No crack in the rock breaks the verticality of the lines, most of which stretch to the region of the eternal snows (Buch 1823a, 24).⁵

The map that accompanied von Buch's letter counts today as one of the first occurrences of the toponym 'Trentino' (Ciancio 2005, 241), distinct from the one attached to the article in the *Annales de chimie et de physique* (1823, Fig. 2.8).

Von Buch furnished his article with a set of stratigraphic profiles meant as an illustration to his volcanic explanation of the origin of the dolomite rock and the 'odd' stratification presented in the Fassa Valley (Fig. 2.9); according to Buch, and contrary to the hypothesis advanced by Marzari Pencati, the dolomites were formed as a result of an ascent of heated magnesium-vapour from the outpourings of the Triassic volcanic rocks, which are found in association with the dolomites.⁶ This mapping procedure, which combined coloured or colour-coded drawings and diagrams, was the same that von Buch had learned at the Werner's school in Freiberg (Schäfer-Weiss and Versemann 2005); most recently, David Oldroyd, in a well-documented article tracing the history of this treatment of 'maps as pictures and diagrams', discovered and published the only geognostic map which survived, made by Werner at Freiberg (Oldroyd 2013, 80, Fig. 28). Maps of this sort, however, were not only produced by scientists or geologists, but also by surveyors and inspectors of mines, as the exchange between von Buch and Pfaundler attests.

The Laboratory of the Picturesque

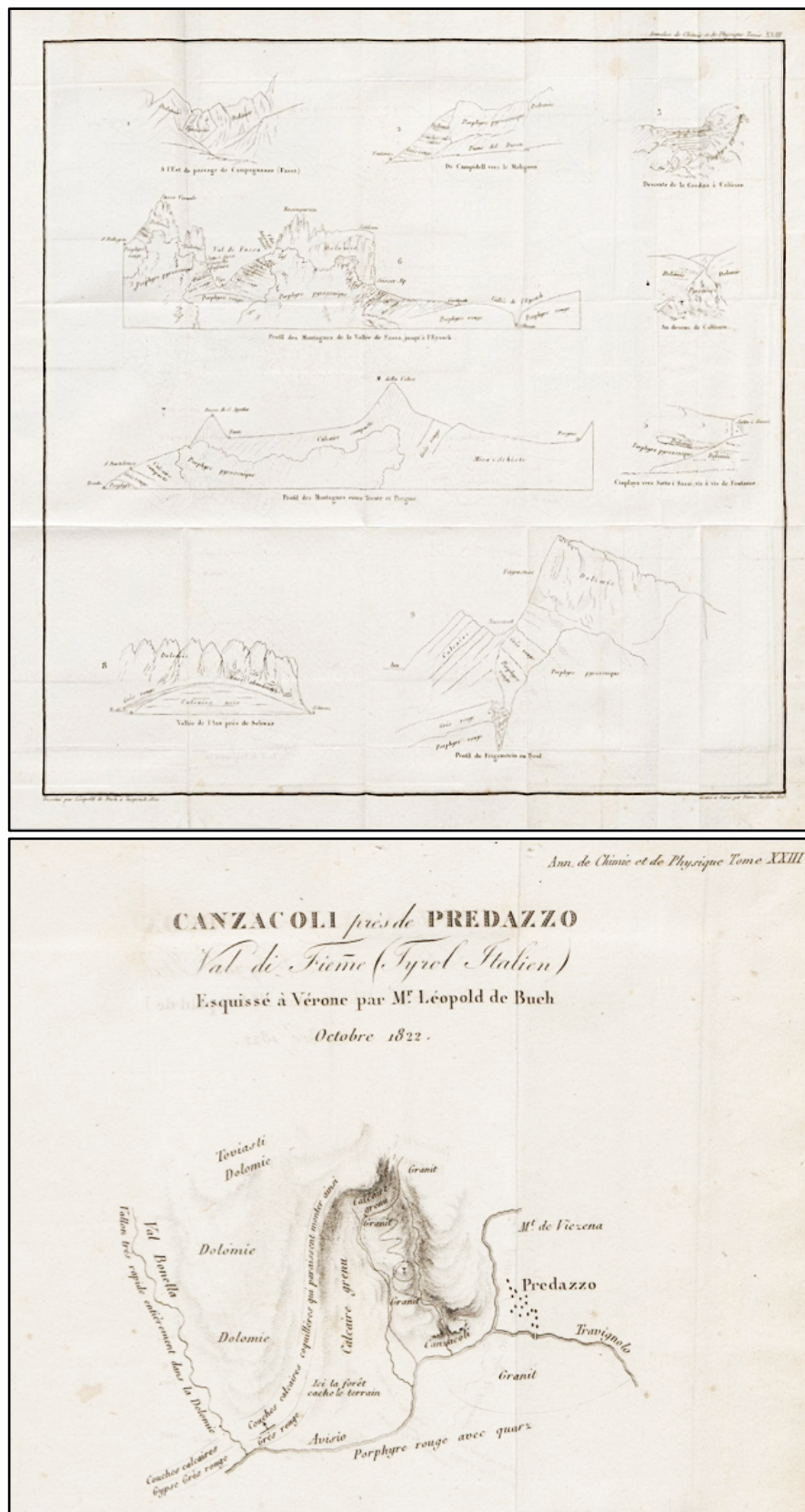


Fig. 2.9 - Leopold von Buch, *Geological Profiles of the Predazzo Area*, 1822, published in the *Annales de chimie et de physique* (1823).

The Laboratory of the Picturesque

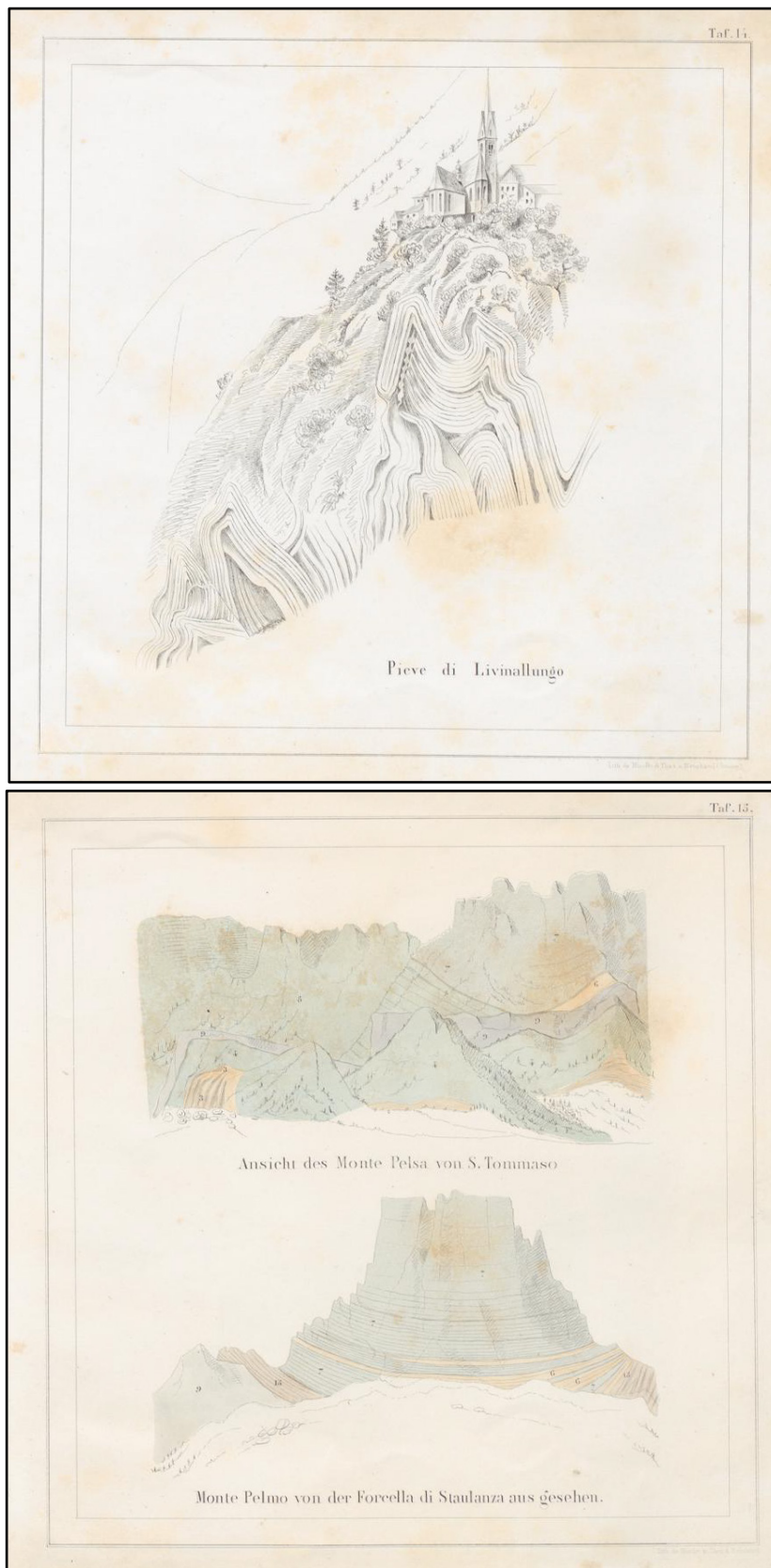


Fig. 2.10 - Wilhelm Fuchs, Plate 14 *Pieve di Livinallungo* and Plate 15 *Monte Pelmo* (1844).

Away for a moment from the Predazzo area, it is worth mentioning the still rather mysterious work by Wilhem Fuchs, *Bergverwalter* or superintendent of the mines in the Agordo and Zoldo Valleys, who in 1844 wrote a pioneering book on the mineralogical potential of the area, already explored by Balthazar Hacquet, providing important information on its industrial exploitation. In his truly remarkable *Die Venetianer Alpen: ein Beitrag zur Kenntniss der Hochgebirge* (1844), Fuchs included eighteen finely executed plates, with the first geological illustration of some of the most ‘untrodden’ peaks of the dolomites, demonstrating a technical ability and a topographical familiarity with the area truly unprecedented. Interestingly, in Plate 14, the combination of strata with a picturesque view of Pieve di Livinallongo (Fig. 2.10) offers a unique occasion to appreciate what Oldroyd calls the fusion of ‘pictures’ and ‘diagrams’ on a map in early geological cartography (Oldroyd 2013). Neglected by current scholarship in the history of geology, his book has attracted the interest of historians of mountaineering for his detailed illustration of the Pelmo, allegedly firstly climbed by John Ball in 1857 (Fig. 2.10, see also Chapter 4); the details provided by Fuchs would suggest that he must have climbed the mountain first (Angelini 1953, 12–26, and 1987).

Picturesque Exploitation

Only a few years after the publication of von Buch’s *Esquisse*, the same architectonic terminology to describe the Dolomites (‘bastions’, ‘obelisks’, ‘towers’, complemented by ‘pyramids’, ‘pinnacles’, ‘domes’, ‘columns’ etc.) would also appear in John Murray’s III description of the ‘Dolomites’ in his pioneering *Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany* (1837):

They form a most striking contrast to all other mountains – in their dazzling whiteness, in their barren sterility, in their steepness, in the innumerable cracks and clefts which traverse their gigantic *walls*, all

running in a vertical direction, and above all, in their sharp peaks and tooth-like ridges, rising many thousand feet into the air, which present the most picturesque outline. Sometimes they take the appearance of *towers* and *obelisks*, divided from one another by cracks some thousand feet deep; at others the points are so numerous and slender, that they put one in mind of a bundle of *bayonets* or *sword-blades*. Altogether, they impart an air of novelty and sublime grandeur to the scene, which can only be appreciated by those who have viewed it (*ibid.*, 241, italics mine).

This kind of terminology would become commonplace in all subsequent Victorian travel books, and proposed as a distinctive signature pertaining almost uniquely to the Dolomite Mountains (see, for instance, Gilbert and Churchill 1864, 66, 148, 155; Gilbert 1869, 80, 90, 114; Edwards 1873, 127, 158, 240; Sanger Davies 1894, 35, 83–85; Farrer 1913, 54, 105; Abraham 1919, 3–11, 47, 67).⁷

Distinct from these books, however, which exhibit almost invariably a rich visual apparatus, Murray's guide is devoid of any images. The only exception, in over four hundred pages, is an engraving of the Langkofel (Sassolungo), in the Grödnertal (Val Gardena, Fig. 2.11, right). The exception is highly significant, because the view portrayed in Murray's is basically the same that also appeared in von Buch's letter to Humboldt, with the following justification:

In the southern part of Tyrol, the shape of the mountains made of this rock is so extraordinary and so surprising that I have commissioned Mr Schweighofer, a good painter of Innsbruck, to draw one of the most remarkable. The drawing, of which I offer you a copy, provides all that which particularly distinguishes and characterises the dolomite mountains (Buch 1823b, 300).⁸

In von Buch's times, the presence of this image in a scholarly context constituted an exception (Fig. 2.11, left); before the 1830s – as Martin Rudwick has shown – the visual apparatus accompanying geological dissertations was very scant if

not inexistent (Rudwick 1976, 184; but see now Oldroyd 2013). Its inclusion, therefore, is a direct consequence of the impossibility to find the right words to illustrate the outlandish bizarreness of the Dolomite morphology (Felsch 2009; Panizza 2001 and 2009; Reynard and Panizza 2005).⁹

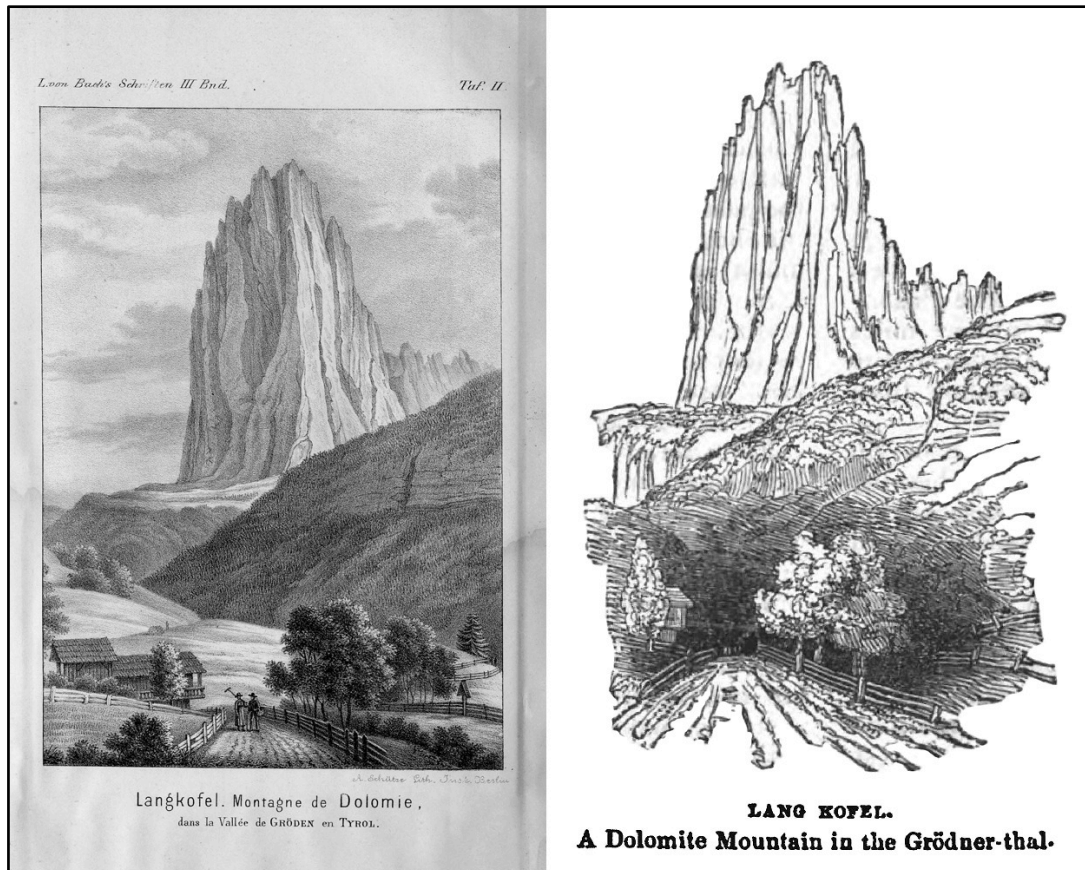


Fig. 2.11 - Left: Franz Xaver Schweighofer (1797-1861), *Langkofel: Montagne de Dolomie*, in Buch 1823a, Plate 2; Right: *Lang Kofel: A Dolomite Mountain in the Grödner-thal*, in Murray 1837, 248.

The two pictures (Fig. 2.11) are taken from the same point of view (Grödnertal or Val Gardena), and there is no doubt that Murray's decision to include the engraving in his guide was dictated by the same illustrative concerns expressed by von Buch. If we look more closely, however, the scenery that in Schweighofer's lithograph 'distinguishes and characterises' the peak also includes the peasants of the valley. In Murray's version, instead, peasants are excluded, and their barn, on the left, is carefully hidden behind trees; similarly,

the fenced path, which in Schweighofer's picture leads towards fertile pastures, ends, in Murray's, in an indistinct darkness. Murray's picture is slightly more zoomed-in in order to crop some of the surrounding details – nothing should distract the viewer from the contemplation of the main subject: the imposing and isolated Langkofel.

Crucial for our purpose is not just the identification of the German source of Murray's picture and the promotion of von Buch as the 'discoverer' of the picturesque view of the Dolomites; but to point out how, via Murray, von Buch's verbal and visual material could migrate from a scientific to a touristic context. The motivations of the German scientists, attracted to the Dolomites to verify or refute established geognostic theories (Vardabasso 1922), were very different from the ones shared by British travellers, who would soon start meandering between their 'unfrequented' valleys and 'untrodden' peaks (Edwards 1873). Despite the repeated references on the beautiful, picturesque and sublime character of these mountains, the British 'invention' of the Dolomites clearly emerged from a 'touristic', rather than 'geological', context; a context, however, that had already fully absorbed the aesthetic principles of the picturesque.

In Murray's *Handbook*, the illustration of the Langkofel is introduced by another passage, which, in describing the unique morphology of the Dolomite Mountain, constitutes a further variation to the one quoted above:

They are unlike any other mountains, and are to be seen nowhere else among the Alps. They arrest the attention by the singularity and picturesqueness of their forms, by their sharp peaks or *horns*, sometimes rising up in *pinnacles* and *obelisks*, at others extending in serrated ridges, toothed like the jaw of an alligator; now fencing in the valley with an escarped precipice many thousand feet high, and often cleft with numerous fissures all running nearly vertically. They are perfectly barren, destitute of vegetation of any sort, and usually of a light yellow or whitish colour (*ibid.* 247, italics mine).

This passage constituted the stimulus for the travels in the Dolomite region by the already mentioned Josiah Gilbert and George Cheetham Churchill. Their book, *The Dolomite Mountains* (1864), credited of having firstly disseminated the current label of the entire district, did not fail to quote Murray's passage in full, openly admitting that their "curiosity was excited by these descriptions" (*ibid.*, xvi).

Without forgetting Murray's ubiquitous handbook, *The Dolomite Mountains* certainly acted as the practical authority for many Victorian and Edwardian authors describing their travels in the Dolomites (Abraham 1907; Cunningham and Abney 1887; Dent 1892; Gilbert 1869). Likewise, their names are to be found in the already mentioned best-seller by Edwards (1873). By stressing the 'untroddenness' and 'unfrequentedness' of Dolomite peaks and valleys, however, Edwards' formula qualified Murray's initial description with an arresting idea of outlandishness. This qualification appeared almost invariably in all the prefaces to Victorian and Edwardian travel books, with an implicit reference to Edwards, as we shall see in Chapter 4 and 8. The geological – and Italo-German – contribution to the 'discovery' of the Dolomites remains here an issue of marginal and to some extent antiquarian interest.

In John Murray's *Handbook*, the beauty of the Dolomitic landscape is announced in terms that tallied with the Burkean definition of the sublime. In a recirculation of imagery that was established a century before by Burke, Murray described the Dolomites as imparting 'an air of novelty and sublime grandeur to the scene which can only be appreciated by those who have viewed it' (Murray 1837, 241). Outside geological circles, the Dolomites were relatively unheard of at the time of Murray's publication; and, understandably, he devoted to them only a few pages. Nonetheless, the revelation of new unfrequented places was one of the strengths with which he intended to promote his guidebooks: 'the countries described in the following pages have been much less trodden by

English travellers, and more rarely described by English authors; many of the routes, indeed, are scarcely alluded to in any work in our language' (*ibid.*, iii).¹⁰

His statement was certainly true for the Dolomite region; although their visit was packaged as a detour from the main road leading from Munich to Venice. Whilst comprehensive in its geographical coverage, the handbook tended to focus on matter-of-fact descriptions and to avoid the inclusion of illustrations. The handbook, however, meticulously incorporated anecdotes about both natural and cultural sites; landscape descriptions were often accompanied with geological and geographical explanations. Despite his succinct style, however, Murray included pithy and sentimental quotes from prominent literary figures of the Romantic oeuvre, particularly Byron, which goes some way to avoid modern claims that the handbook was overly clinical (Palmowski 2002, 108; Buzard 1993b, 31); while the handbook was practical, it was also capable to create an air of erudite connoisseurship.

If, however, Murray's handbook represents an early example of a more utilitarian and standardized guide, it helps mark the moment when travel guides became concerned for being 'objective' and meeting 'the requirements of an increasingly commodified "leisure migration" in an age of industrial capitalism' (Koshar 1998, 326). One of Murray's modernisms, for instance, was to arrange practical and descriptive details (Fig. 2.12), alongside numbered routes that ran from one large town to another, providing the reader with the necessary information to travel affordably and comfortably. As a result of Murray and his innovations in the genre of travel writing, 'we today perceive a fairly fixed distinction in the field of travel literature between the objective "guidebook" on one the hand and the impressionistic "travel book" (or the more tentative "travel sketch") on the other' (Buzard 1993b, 67; Borm 2004, 13).

TABLE F.

Various foreign Measures of Length reduced to the English Measure.

Foreign Measures.		English Measure.			Observations.
		Miles	Furl.	Yds.	
1 Bohemian Mile	=	5	6	17	Some people make a German geographical mile = 8071 yards English, or 4 miles 4 furlongs 151 yards. Some, = 8101 yards English, or 4 miles 4 furlongs 181 yards. Some = 8106 yards English, or 4 miles 4 furlongs 186 yards.
1 Danish mile	=	4	5	104	
1 French Post	=	4	6	166	
1 Flanders Mile	=	3	7	50	
1 German Geographical Mile	=	4	4	183	
1 ——— long Mile	=	5	6	7	
1 ——— short Mile	=	3	7	39	
1 Hamburg Mile	=	4	5	104	
1 Holland Mile	=	3	5	16	
1 Italian Mile	=	1	1	45	
1 Prussian Mile	=	4	6	108	
1 Russian Werst	=		5	67	
1 Saxony Mile	=	5	5	5	
1 Swiss Mile	=	5	1	183	
1 Westphalian Mile	=	6	6	208	

14 Dresden feet = 13 English feet.

1 Dresden Ell = 2 Dresden feet = $1\frac{1}{2}$ English feet.]

21 Dresden Ells = 13 English yards.

1 Dresden Ruthe or Perch = 8 Dresden Ells = $4\frac{20}{21}$ English yards, or 4,9523 English yards.

A Saxon mile has been fixed at 2000 Ruthes = 9905 English yards = 5 miles 5 furlongs 5 yards English.

Fig. 2.12 - Foreign measurements converted into English units from Murray's 1837 handbook.

As for natural beauty, Murray exploited, together with geological details, notions of the sublime and the picturesque, tamed down, however, with some information about the potentiality for an industrial and economic exploitation of certain sites. In the case of picturesque scenery, the description sometimes indulges in ethnographic details, marking a clear distinction between the advanced status of the English nation in relation to others. Such contradictory and prescriptive commentary somewhat deters from the putative objectivity that Murray claims to offer his readers in the handbook's preface. Rudy Koshar argues that Murray's guides not only reintroduced national differences in a process of touristic consumption, they also affirmed a commitment to domestic class difference, 'using other national experiences to lament that which English

culture allegedly lacked' (Koshar 1998, 330). The resultant search and drive for cultural and touristic authenticity 'could thus result in the reaffirmation of power relations and structures of authority and deference' (*ibid.*); in other words, a 'not-so-hidden partisanship' or 'colonialist position' (Spurgeon Thompson 2012, 174).¹¹

The English view of Dolomite peasants could reflect the same 'dynamic of domination and deference comparable to that existing between the English and "Third World" inhabitants' (Koshar 1998, 329). Murray does not neglect, for example, to highlight that the Tyrolese 'peasant wears a very thick ring of silver or iron on the little finger of the right hand' so that 'a fist so armed inflicts cruel wounds', not a moment before describing how the mountain-dwelling Tyrolese 'darling' love is for music and dance (Murray 1837, 206-207); although, in doing this, he was exploiting a trend that started to become popular in England during that time. For a more or less contemporary example of the popularity of Tyrolese music and hospitality, I mention an unpublished letter by Edward Cox to Dr Nicholas Patrick Wiseman, later Cardinal and first Archbishop of Westminster (1850):

From Venice we travelled by a new road to Innsbruck, through Belluno, Brixen and the lovely Buxterthal (i.e. Pustertal). I shall never forget the happy days in the Tyrol. We were everywhere received with the greatest respect. Every person that passed our carriage saluted us; even the soldiers on guard presented arms to us. But some accident prevented us in every village from hearing the Tyrolese singing. At one place the singers were too bad, at another they were gone to work, at third they were too bashful. One wagoner sung for us, and such sounds I never heard a man, except from some of the Romans. Before I saw the man, I thought we were listening to a female voice (Ushaw College Archive, Durham, Wiseman Papers 207, Munich 23.05.1834).

This passage is particularly important not only because it mentions, before Murray, the ‘new road to Innsbruck’, via Belluno, Brixen/Bressanone and the Pustertal – that is the road that brings the traveller in a direct contact with the Dolomite Mountains – but it also shows that before Murray the connection between peaks and beauty was made so explicitly. Edward Cox is clearly more attracted by what was going on in the valleys than what he could see by admiring the peaks; nevertheless, Tyrol is implicitly described as a place not completely unknown (possibly through Latrobe’s travel book, see below), and the new road through Pustertal seemed to have attracted some interest.

A similar indifference towards the Dolomite scenery is also witnessed in some famous travel books before Murray. For example, in Jean-François Albanis Beaumont’s *Travels through the Rhaetian Alps in the year 1786 from Italy to Germany through Tyrol* (1792), in which a little detour towards the Fassa Valley (see here Chapter 2) is more attracted by the turbulence of the river than by the mightiness of the mountains, which in fact are depicted without particular attention to their ‘dolomitic’ morphology (Fig. 2.13): ‘From thence we proceeded to the town Lavis, seated at the torrent Avisio, which rushes with great rapidity from a Glacier situated between two remarkably steep mountains, called *Vedretta di Marmolata* and *Campo della Salva*, in the Bellunese province’, noticing only that ‘the highest mountains south of the Great Brenner are distinguished by the name Vedretta, and those on the north by that of Spitz’ (*ibid.*, 37). That is more or less all. Similarly, in *Tombleson’s Ansichten von Tyrol*, published in London in 1835, the entire attention is devoted to the picturesque castles of the Val d’Adige and the mighty blocks of porphyry that had made famous the region (Allom and Isser 1835); this fashion for Tyrolean castles remained popular for the entire century, as Bradshaw’s *Notes for Travellers in Tyrol and Vorarlberg* (1863) testifies (Fig. 2.14).



Fig. 2.13 - Jean-François Albanis Beaumont, *Mountain near Belluno*, in Albanis Beaumont 1792, 26.

No English tourist was expected to read Leopold von Buch or Alexander von Humboldt – Murray read them for them. However, in his evocative descriptions of the landscape, he talks only of the ‘dolomite’ mineral that makes its appearance in the landscape, mentioning Dolomieu, Saussure and von Buch as geologists who studied its particular composition. Only occasionally the term ‘dolomites’ appears to indicate the mountains; and this remains the case for later editions of the handbook (see for instance Murray 1857). In a book such as Walter White’s *On Foot Through Tyrol, in the Summer of 1855* (1856), one would expect to find some comments about mountain scenery; yet, the word ‘dolomite’ is entirely missing. White’s book reads in fact more like a pilgrimage to the sites and monuments of Andreas Hofer (1767-1810), the Tyrolean innkeeper, who became the leader of a rebellion against Napoleon, and a legend in Britain (Cole 1994; Eyck 1986).

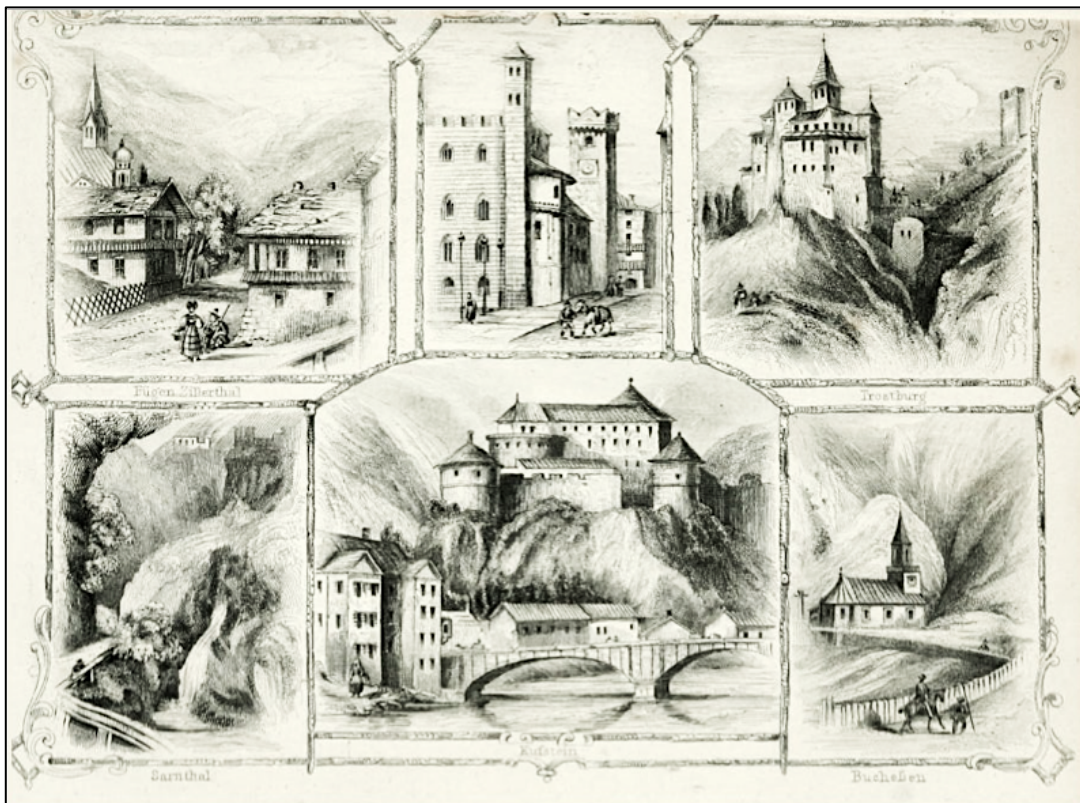


Fig. 2.14 - Castles of Tyrol, in *Bradshaw's Notes for Travellers in Tyrol and Vorarlberg*, 1863, 28.

One exception should be made for the case of Charles Joseph Latrobe (1801-1875) and his *The Pedestrian, a Summer's Ramble in the Tyrol* (1832). Latrobe, favourably mentioned by Murray (1837, 212, 246-247, 274), but significantly not in the Dolomite section, offers here a lively portray of the Tyrol, mainly focussing, however, on the culture of its valleys and the fervent religiosity of its inhabitants. In the chapter dealing with the Grödnertal/Val Gardena, he describes the Dolomites from both a geological and a scenic point of view, demonstrating to have read von Buch ('They are composed of that species of chrystalline limestone which is termed dolomite by geologists, and seem to have been heaved up from their original level, by the formation of the porphyry upon which they rest', Latrobe 1832, 293-294). In his depiction of the scenery, Latrobe does not reach Murray's flamboyant style; but he is sincerely moved by the Dolomites and their morphology:

They for the most part rise perpendicularly from the general swelling surface of the country, and present to the eye, immense walls of great elevation, tinged with a great variety of colours, among which the red predominates. Towards their summits they exhibit the most singular and varied forms. The barrenness of this apparently inaccessible rock is so complete, that no living animal is known to exist upon them, and the chamois is a stranger to their solitudes ... What enjoyment! what true enjoyment! rest after toil – a bright sun – delicious air – a clear spring – and glorious scenery (*ibid.*, 294-295).

This is the only part in the book in which Latrobe expresses his enthusiasm for the Dolomite scenery, which he judges ‘more romantic’ – certainly in the morphological sense that we have discussed in the previous chapter – than the one of the Engadine, but as clean and neat as the Swiss villages to be found there. These are elements that Amelia Edwards will fully exploit in her Dolomite bestseller (see Chapter 4); perhaps Latrobe’s book is also responsible to inspire her subtitle – *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys: A Midsummer Ramble in the Dolomites* (1973). In Latrobe, we could add, the ‘snow is untrodden’ (1832, 21) and the byepaths ‘unfrequented’ (*ibid.*, 312).

The ‘dolomite mountains’ make their appearance also in the amiably written book, *A Tour to and from Venice by the Vaudois and the Tyrol* (1846) by the ‘Anglo-Italian’ traveller Louisa Stuart Costello (1799-1870), which is equally worth quoting:

Hour after hour we continued mounting, and descending stupendous heights, from whence rose, higher still, strange-pointed rocks, piercing the skies, the *horns* of dolomite mountains. Sometimes huge masses peered over all, capped with snow, and shining in the gleaming sun. The rocks of porphyry for which the valley of the Eisack is renowned, rise purple and ruddy bathed by the numerous contending torrents tributary to the old Eisack, that foam, and chafe, and roar, and send up their clouds

of spray like fairy wreaths amongst the gigantic masses that impede their way (*ibid.*, 389).

Costello's scenery strikes more like a soundscape than a landscape; but in a book basically written following the conventions of a continental travelogue, this mentioning of the Dolomites certainly demonstrates that also the so-called 'Anglo-Italians' read Murray. Yet, the observations still tend to remain vague and sporadic, as they remain so, it seems, in *Through the Tyrol to Venice* (1860) by Charlott Gordon Hall (Saunders 2012; Zelger 1995). To find the Dolomites firmly inscribed into a tourist route and included into a vernacular vocabulary, we have to wait for the publication of Gilbert and Churchill's *The Dolomite Mountains* in 1864 (see Chapter 4). There, the geological importance presented by the dolomite rock is confined in an appendix – as a paratextual addition to a travel book.

Notes

¹ The legend of Andreas Hofer (1767-1810), the Austrian innkeeper who led a local rebellion against Napoleon's forces and who came to be acknowledged as a hero even in Britain (Cole 1994; Eyck 1986), could only be exploited to promote Tyrol not the Dolomites and their natural scenery.

² The extensive and beautiful private mineral collection of Abraham Gottlob Werner in Freiberg is still in existence; similarly this is the case for the equally admirable of Adolf Traugott von Gersdorf (1744-1807) in Görlitz, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) in Weimar (Guntau 2009; Hamm 2001).

³ The list of names mentioned by Edwards comprises: Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), Wilhelm Fuchs (1802-1853), Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905), Sir Roderick Impey Murchison (1792-1871), and Jean-Baptiste Armand Louis Léonce Élie de Beaumont (1798-1874); with the sole exception of Richthofen, they all belonged to Edwards' previous generation, showing that in her times the Nave d'Oro's visitor book had already become by Edwards' times a collector of memories and a heritage object.

⁴ Francesco Calzolari's (1522-1609) *Viaggio di Monte Baldo* (1566) was followed by a series of excursions of other Venetian and Veronese botanists in the region, up to the pioneering reports by Luigi Ferdinando Marsili (1658-1730), in which a particular attention to geological phenomena becomes evident; as Ciancio shows, Marsili ought to be included among the pioneers of the appreciation of mountain scenery (showing 'una genuina curiosità per il paesaggio', 'a genuine curiosity for the landscape') during the first half of the eighteenth century (Ciancio 1999, 212). Local artists, such as Pietro Marchioretto (1761-1828), from Lamon, near Feltre, also need to be mentioned (Conte 2007), as well as nineteenth-century drawings by Osvaldo Monti, who certainly did not have to know Murray or von Buch to compose his landscapes (Zandonella Callegher 2002); on Dolomite art, see Strobl 2006.

⁵ Here the original in German: 'Noch kein Naturforscher hat das Fassathal betreten, ohne von dem Anblick der hohen, weissen, zackigen Felsen, welche dieses merkwürdige und lehrreiche Thal von allen Seiten umgeben, in Erstaunen gesetzt

worden zu seyn. Ihre senkrechte Spalten zertheilen sie in so wunderbare Obelisk und Thürme, dass man umsonst sich bemüht sich zu erinnern, in anderen Theilen der Alpen etwas ähnliches gesehen zu haben. Glatte Wände stehen ganz senkrecht mehrere tausend Fuss in die Höhe, dünn und tief abgesondert von anderen Spitzen und Zacken, welche ohne Zahl aus dem Boden heraufzusteigen scheinen. Oft möchte man sie mit gefrorenen Wasserfällen vergleichen, deren mannigfaltige Eiszacken umgedreht und in die Höhe gerichtet sind. Nirgends bricht eine Zerspaltung in anderer Richtung das Senkrechte dieser Linien; und die meisten erheben sich bis weit in die Region des ewigen Schnees' (for the English translation, see Gianolla 2008, 86); the same passage is also to be found in the letter to Pflauser (Buch 1877b, 82).

⁶ Von Buch's theory was doomed to be surpassed by the coral-riff hypothesis (Richthofen 1860; Mojsisovics von Mojsvar 1879), firstly formulated by Ferdinand von Richthofen (1833-1905), then further developed by the Scottish geologist Maria Ogilvie Gordon (1864-1939), the first woman to be awarded a Doctor of Science from the University of London; interestingly also Ogilvie conducted her research in the Predazzo area and stayed at the Nave d'Oro Hotel (Wachtler and Burek 2007; Ogilvie Gordon 1928, 1894, 1900, 1902, 1903, 1907 and 1909). For the status of the art in the Victorian and then Edwardian periods, see the last chapter of Gilbert and Churchill's *The Dolomite Mountains* (1864), written by Churchill, and Skeats 1905.

⁷ See, on this point, the UNESCO official documentation: 'The possibility of classifying the karst structures into recognisable geometric shapes (points, lines, surfaces) and precise volumetric figures (prisms, cubes, parallelepipeds) have often led to an interpretation of the Dolomites as architectural structures. Like for monuments of the antiquity or modern skyscrapers, a giant order dominates the fantastic shapes of the Dolomites: detached volumes, perfectly vertical walls, clean bases ... Even the used terms in order to describe their shapes are borrowed from architectonic nomenclature: e.g. towers, rampart, steeples, pinnacles, pillars, bell towers, roofs, balconies, terraces, and cornices' (Gianolla 2008, 79).

⁸ The original reads as follows: 'La forme des montagnes qui sont composées de cette roche, dans la partie méridionale du Tyrol, est si extraordinaire et si frappante que j'ai engagé M. Schweighofer, habile peintre d'Innsbruck, d'en dessiner une de plus remarquables. Le dessin dont je vous offre une copie présente tout ce qui distingue et

caractérise particulièrement les montagnes de dolomie'. The artist, active in Innsbruck, is the engineer Franz Xaver Schweighofer (1797-1861), from Brixen/Bressanone in South Tyrol.

⁹ In 1823b, von Buch was already aware that the description of the unique geomorphodiversity of the Dolomite peaks was difficult to achieve through the verbal medium alone: 'they are so different that in each of them one believes to see a complete new world' ('so verschieden sind [sie], daß man in jeder von ihnen eine ganz neue Welt zu sehen glaubt'). To describe them without the visual support had become a challenge, to the point of altering the 'scientific' decorum of the geological dissertation and yielding towards a literary prose: 'I have tried to distantiate myself, as these wonderful forms of dolomite in the southern Tyrol in their boldness always grew and finally surpassed everything that the most vivid imagination might have imagined' ('Ich habe mich ferner auseinander zu setzen bemüht, wie diese wunderbare Formen des Dolomits im südlichen Tyrol in ihrer Kühnheit stets zunehmen und endlich alles übertreffen, was die lebhafteste Einbildungskraft sich hätte vorstellen mögen', Buch 1823b, 33–34).

¹⁰ Murray's guidebook series lasted from 1836 to 1864. Murray wrote many of them himself, but also sent out writers 'to survey and report upon all the countries covered'. By 1848, Murray had produced sixty guides. In the earlier guides, such as the one used here, Murray seems to urge 'his tourist to occupy the position of *non-participant* observer' (Thompson 2012, 173–175). Whether or not Murray's tourists assumed this position remains debatable.

¹¹ Elsewhere, scholars have also labelled Murray's handbooks as 'canonical texts of travel', and as representative of a 'touchstone of Englishness'. So culturally pioneering were Murray's handbooks, and prolific, that they came to be 'a positive signifier of national identity', though 'critically validated as forming and imposing a particularly English way of thinking and seeing so that Murray's pronouncements on art, culture and manners were also *the* accepted English line on these matters' (Goodwin and Johnston 2013, 50–52). Murray's intention was to chart all countries on Earth through his guidebooks; mostly of Europe and British colonies, but also other areas were 'systematically described and placed into the framework of rationalized tourism' (Thompson 2012, 173).



CHAPTER 3

The Playground of Europe

I admit that mountaineering, in my sense of the word, is a sport. It is a sport which, like fishing or shooting, brings one into contact with the sublimest aspects of nature ... Still it is strictly a sport – as strictly as cricket, or rowing, or knurr and spell – and I have no wish to place it on a different footing.

— Leslie Stephen

The beginning three lines of Shelley's fifth and final stanza of his poem 'Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni' (1817) offer a Romantic response to the scenery he admired in July 1816 while gazing upon the highest peak in Europe, 'under the eye of Mont Blanc' (Macfarlane 2003, 80).

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:—the power is there,
The still and solemn power of many sights,
And many sounds, and much of life and death.¹

Neither Shelley nor any other Romantic poet actually climbed an Alpine peak (Fleming 2004, 51), preferring to compose their poetry by looking at them from a distance; mountain beauty was to be celebrated and dramatized as an aesthetic response to a landscape as a 'way of seeing'. In one of his letters, Shelley wrote: 'I never imagined what mountains were before ... the immensity of these aerial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of ecstatic wonder not unallied to madness' (Beattie 2006, 331). The transcendental sublimity clearly emerging from these lines was still the result of

a view – not the product of an embodied feeling experienced in the direct engagement with the mountain itself.

But with Shelley's poem we begin to see a change in the poetic mentality of the time; a change that, while still harbouring qualities of enlightened inspiration, began to engage with Alpine landscapes more physically, at least as an intention expressed through words. As Shelley maintained in another letter, it was his youthful familiarity with the mountain scenery that allowed him to engage with that landscape both existentially and corporeally: 'I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea and the solitude of forests; danger which sports upon the brink of precipices has been my playmate' (Stephen 1871, 62). He might have, in reality, kept a distance from the actual edges, but as Robert Macfarlane rightly points out, 'his desire to style himself as a risk-taker was a sign of growing enthusiasm for derring-do' (Macfarlane 2003, 80); or, in other words, for engaging in a real contact with mountains.

In another famous description, Shelley mobilizes geological and artistic ingredients to render a scenery that in its almost cinematic dynamic strikes as fantastic and real at the same time: 'The glaciers creep | Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains, | Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice | Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power | Have pil'd: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle, | A city of death, distinct with many a tower | And wall impregnable of beaming ice' (*Mont Blanc* 4, 100-107). In this passage, the combination of imagination and materiality reconfigures Mont Blanc as a 'city of death' that looks tangibly real in its otherworldly agency. This dynamic image helps us identify a new aesthetic appreciation of the Alps away from the one mediated through the artistic and geological lenses explored in the previous chapters, configuring the ingredients of a third matrix of topographic memory here subsumed under the label of the 'Golden Age of Mountaineering'.

Shelley's *Mont Blanc* is useful for our purpose because it allows us to conceptually bridge the divide between two traditions of symbolic formation – the one that see in the mountain a subjective tool to symbolize mental feelings such as silence, solitude and danger, and the one that see in it an objective device to represent physical sensations such as hardness, resistance and fatigue, as the most tangible example of the 'thingness' of things (Ferguson 1993, 336). In this chapter, therefore, the practice of mountaineering is not merely treated as a sportive endeavour referring to the latter, but as an expansive matrix in which both the mental and the material traditions of symbolic formation could coexist.

Shelley's poem is a prudent place to start also because of the prominent position Mont Blanc itself would hold in the Golden Age sensibility and its role in the history of 'modernist' mountaineering. Peter Hansen has recently charted the history of its first ascent by Jacques Belmat and Michel-Gabriel Paccard (8th of August 1786), and how this history contributed to the subsequent elevation of Mont Blanc as a foundational 'myth in narratives of mountaineering and modernity' (Hansen 2013, 33). It was the geologist Horace-Bénédict de Saussure who registered the scientific relevance of the mountain itself and instigated its hotly competed-for first ascent. Having attempted and failed the ascent himself several times, he offered a reward for the first successful climb. But the very moment of Mont Blanc's first ascent, while paradoxically killing the myth that its summit was untouchable by man, became a monumental rubric for generating new myths about modernity. Aspirations towards hegemonic sovereignty, imperialism, heroism, masculinity and assertions of personal character and will would provide some of the keystones to the phenomenon of 'Victorian sensationalism' to be reflected in the Golden Age mentality (Secord 2000; Gilbert 2011).

Hansen further explains: 'The ascent of Mont Blanc had diverse meanings and significance in relation to different networks, cosmologies, and practices at the end of the eighteenth century. The ascent did not embody one representation of enlightenment, modernity, masculinity, or individuality, but entangled competing and mutually constitutive contemporary visions of each' (Hansen 2013, 117). From the moment of Mont Blanc's first successful ascent, the symbolic magnetism attached to mountains mutated into something achieved through heroic competitiveness and physical engagement with the mountain itself. Being the first person to conquer a peak gained importance at the level of both the Self and the Nation, beyond the drive of enlightened science. Science necessitated fieldwork to conduct its inspections, as discussed in the previous chapter; its results, however, were generally charted on maps, displayed in cabinets and rehearsed in the comfort of a geologist's laboratory – not, as in the case of mountaineers, by planting a flag on a mountain's summit.

The nation for which these sensational symbols became most significant was Britain, thanks also to the popularity of some key figures, such as Albert Smith, Leslie Stephen and Edward Whymper (Hansen 2013; Braham 2004; Douglas et al. 2011; Colley 2010; Thompson 2010; Allec 2009; Macfarlane 2003; Wilson 2006; Wells 2004; Conefrey and Jordan 2002; Fleming 2001; Ellis 2001; Neate 1980; Irving 1955; Clark 1953). While alpinists may have conducted themselves to fashion a Golden-Age imagination, it was the institutional framework of the London's Alpine Club that promoted it, both in terms of the nationalist bombast it sanctioned and the individual style of mountaineering it seemed to require from its members (Hansen 1995). These individuals and this organization will form the backbone of this chapter.

Alpine history is not easily divided into arbitrary periods. Scholars, however, seem to agree with the convention that the Golden Age of Mountaineering lasted only eleven years from 1854 to 1865 (Braham 2004; Fleming 2001; 2004;

Hansen 1995; 2013; Macfarlane 2003). Early Alpine commentators too, notably Carus Cunningham and William Abney, writing only two decades after the supposed end of the Golden Age would write:

The 17th of September 1854, the date of the first ascent of the Wetterhorn from Grindelwald is a red-letter day in the history of modern mountaineering, – of mountaineering properly so called which is undertaken for its own sake, and entirely apart from the performing of some particular feat, or from some special scientific object (Cunningham and Abney 1888, 1).

This ‘initiating’ feat, achieved by Sir Alfred Wills (1828-1912; Hansen 2004), acquiescing mountaineering for its own sake, was considered important, additionally, because before it few peaks were claimed with any regularity: ‘Mr. Justice Wills’ ascent of the Wetterhorn was the first of a series of expeditions’, continue Cunningham and Abney, ‘destined to become continuous, and distinctly marked the commencement of systematic mountaineering’ (Cunningham and Abney 1888, 1). Systematic mountaineering is a notion to be returned to later as it features prominently as a style of the Golden Age which in turn played a role in forming the symbolic qualities of this ‘great age of conquest’ when ‘the greatest, at all events the tallest, giants of the Alps were slain’ (*ibid.*, 14).

The culminating ascent of the Matterhorn, on the other hand, in 1865, brings this short epoch to a close: ‘the ascent of the Matterhorn seemed to be such an important event in the history of mountaineering, that it has been preferred to select 1865, as the terminating year of this most remarkable period’ (Cunningham and Abney 1888, 14). Sir Arnold Lunn, writing in the early twentieth century, would equally historicize the event in his *The Alps* (1914; Burns 2004): ‘the conquest of the Matterhorn does in a certain sense define a period ... Only a few great peaks still remained unconquered’ (Lunn 1914, 185),

further attesting the rapidity to which the phrase 'Golden Age', and its timeframe, subtended standard vocabulary in the historiography of Alpinism (Motti 1997, 1: 111–115). Racing to peaks, attested by the concentration of conquered summits, delimits a fundamental dialectic of the Golden Age – Alpine sensationalism – on which I focus first.

Alpine Sensationalism

If the successful ascent of Mont Blanc in 1786 had ushered in the start of modern mountaineering, for its own sake, and Shelley's *Lines Written in the Vale of Chamonui* had somehow sanctioned a more physical dimension within mountain appreciation, events in 1865 certainly brought about a swift reappraisal of the 'meaning of the mountain', when it obtained all its 'city of death', material realities (Ferguson 1993). The Matterhorn, towering over the village of Zermatt in Switzerland, had acquired an iconic status amongst mountaineers and the public alike, replacing the role that Mont Blanc had assumed almost century before. Unlike the environs of Mont Blanc, however, the Matterhorn was not the preserve of tourists as the former had become (Hansen 2013). Even Ruskin, writing in 1862, observed that 'the effect of this strange Matterhorn upon the imagination is indeed so great ... that even the greatest philosophers cannot resist it' (Fleming 2004, 54); the Matterhorn remained so much the most significant peak unclaimed in the Alps that by the middle of the 1860s the mountaineer and physicist John Tyndall (1820-1893; see Brock 2004) would talk of its 'prestige of invincibility which is not without its influence on the mind, and almost lends one to expect to encounter some new and unheard-of source of peril upon it' (Tyndall 1875, 30–31; Hansen 1995, 318). Today, the mountain is iconically associated to Switzerland's cultural identity; the canton Valais is branded as the 'Matterhorn State' (Rudaz 2009, 150; Debarbieux and Rudaz 2008, Zimmer 2000).

In competition with many other nations, and after several failed attempts, it would be, like the Wetterhorn, an English party that would take the prize of being first to the Matterhorn's summit on the 14th of July 1865. The winning team was lead by mountaineer-illustrator Edward Whymper (1840-1911; Henry 2011; Smith 2008; Smythe 1940), hotly chased by an Italian party following another route (Whymper 1880; Motti 1997, 1: 98–111).² Whymper would account for his expedition in his acclaimed and now classic mountaineering text – 'the most famous mountaineering book in the world' (Neate 1980, 150) – *Scrambles Amongst the Alps* (1893 [1871]; Conway 1904, 35; Neate 1980, 150). Here he writes convincingly of the myth of the Matterhorn:

it was the last great Alpine peak which remained unscaled, – less on account of the difficulty of doing so, than from the terror inspired by its invincible appearance. There seemed to be a *cordon* drawn around it, up to which one might go, but no farther. Within that invisible line gins and effreets were supposed to exist – the wandering Jew and the spirits of the damned. The superstitious natives in the surrounding valleys (many of whom firmly believed it to be not only the highest mountain in the Alps, but in the world) spoke of a ruined city on its summit wherein the spirits dwelt; and if you laughed, they gravely shook their heads; told you to look yourself to see the castles and the walls, and warned one against a rash approach, lest the infuriate demons from their impregnable heights might hurl down vengeance for one's derision (Whymper 1893, 73–74).

Whymper's language is not dissimilar from what one might expect from a gothic novel such as Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolfo* or *The Italian* (see Chapter 1) or indeed from the poetry of Shelley's *Mont Blanc*; it strongly contributed to the continuation of the Matterhorn legend, even if it was a self-promotion of Whymper's own mountaineering feats. The text is undoubtedly sensationalistic,

however, in its exciting provocation, as is the illustration that accompanied it (Fig. 3.1).



Fig. 3.1 - Edward Whymper, 'A cannonade on the Matterhorn (1862)', left; 'The Crag of the Matterhorn, During the Storm, Midnight, Aug. 10, 1863', right (1893, 126, 162).

Passages on the ascent itself are as equally revealing: 'The last doubt vanished! The Matterhorn was ours! Nothing but 200 feet of easy snow remained surmounted! ... The higher we rose, the more intense became the excitement ... At 1.40 P.M. the world was at our feet, at the Matterhorn was conquered. Hurrah! Not a footstep could be seen' (Whymper 1893, 377). 'So the traditional inaccessibility of the Matterhorn was vanquished', continues Whymper only to be 'replaced by legends of a more real character' (*ibid.*, 393). The descent was to be marred by a horrific tragedy, making Shelley's macabre insinuations made earlier in the nineteenth century a reality.³

Due to the protocol of attaching climbers together, the failure to attach a rope to a sturdy holding place, and the snapping of a rope of questionable

quality, four of the party of seven fell 4000 feet over the edge of a precipice to their deaths. Whymper vividly sums up the broader lessons of the event in this equally memorable extract:

Others will essay to scale its proud cliffs, but to none will it be the mountain that it was to its early explorers. Others may tread its summit-snows, but none will ever know the feelings of those who first gazed upon its marvellous panorama; and none, I trust, will ever be compelled to tell of joy turned into grief, and of laughter into mourning. It proved to be a stubborn foe; it resisted long, and gave many a hard blow; it was defeated at last with an ease that none could have anticipated, but, like a relentless enemy – conquered but not crushed – it took terrible vengeance (*ibid.*).

Marking a gloomy end-point to the Golden Age of mountaineering, the enthusiastic then calamitous ‘conquering’ of the myth-laden Matterhorn, meant that for mountaineers, according to Jim Ring, ‘risking and losing their lives in a suicidally dangerous activity for the sake of little more than personal glory’ (2000, 78; Thompson 2010, 57–78) became something of an embarrassing promotional mantra for mountaineers to subscribe to; attitudes sharply contrasted with the immediate moment beforehand when ‘the adventures of the great climbers had been followed by the public as if they were sporting heroes’ (*ibid.*; Riffenburgh 1994). *The Edinburgh Review* and Charles Dickens would all go on to chastise the moral motives that had inspired the fortune-hunting mountaineers (Beattie 2006, 213).⁴ Sir Leslie Stephen (1832-1904; see Bell 2004; Sheen 1957) would similarly criticize the mountaineer’s systematic drive towards ‘first ascents’ (Coolidge 1893; Hansen 2013, 25) in his seminal *The Playground of Europe* (1871):

Hence people who kindly excuse us from the blame of notoriety-hunting generally accept the ‘greased-pole’ theory. We are, it seems, overgrown

schoolboys, who, like other schoolboys, enjoy being in dirt, and danger, and mischief, and have as much sensibility for natural beauty as the mountain mules (*ibid.*, 272).

The Matterhorn story itself, however, far from halting the popularity of mountaineering, in fact fascinated the public. While news of the disaster ‘swept across Europe’ the disaster generated ‘unique interest and fascination’ (Clark 1953, 132); ‘for a while Whymper became the most talk-about person in Europe, and lectured on the Matterhorn disaster to packed halls in London’ (Beattie 2006, 213).

Only a generation later, Arnold Lunn (1888-1974), a renowned British skier and mountaineer, would state that ‘there is no book like the famous *Scrambles*, and there is certainly no book which has sent more new climbers to the Alps’ (Lunn 1914, 246). Inadvertent as the Matterhorn event clearly was, Whymper’s public account in fact ‘catapulted’ the Alps ‘into the mainstream of popular literature’ and thought (Fleming 2004, 54). Although there was an outcry over the ‘initial shock and horror aroused by the deaths’, public opinion did ‘not end nor even halt, the expansion of alpine climbing’, says Braham: ‘Fresh challenges were sought; new areas were discovered and developed, aspirations grew bolder, and mountaineering activities ... were no less impressive than those of the first’ (Braham 2004, 19). Nor did the disaster deter Whymper himself; he went on to climb a number of peaks in Ecuador and the Andes (1880) and in Canada and the Rockies (1900-05).⁵

SENSE v. SENSATION.

SOME would have it an age of Sensation,
If the age one of Sense may not be—
The word's not *Old* England's creation,
But New England's, over the sea,—
Where all's in the high-pressure way,
In life just as in locomotion,
And where, though you're here for to-day,
Where to-morrow you'll be, you've no notion.

In that land of fast life and fast laws—
Laws not faster made than they're broken—
Sensation's the spirit that draws
To a head, whate'er's written or spoken.
If a steamer blow up on the lakes,
Or a statesman prove false to the nation,
Its impression the circumstance makes
In a paragraph headed "Sensation."

If a senator gouges a friend
In the course of a lively debate;
Or a pleasure-train comes to an end
By trying to leap a lock-gate;
If the great HIRAM DODGE takes the stump,
Or the President makes an oration,
The event able Editors lump
Under one standing head of "Sensation."

The last horrid murder down South,
The last monster mile-panorama;
Last new sermon, or wash for the mouth,
New acrobat, planet or drama:
All—all is Sensation—so fast,
Piled up by this go-a-head nation,
That by dint of Sensation at last,
There's nothing excites a "Sensation."

And now that across the Atlantic
Worn threadbare "Sensation" we've seen,
And the people that lately were frantic,
Blush to think that such madmen they've been;
Mr. Punch sees with pain and surprise,
On the part of this common sense nation,
Every here and there, on the rise,
This pois'nous exotic "Sensation."

When an acrobat ventures his neck,
In the feats of the flying trapeze,
Or some nigger minstrel would deck
His wool-wig with extra green bays;
If a drama can boast of a run,
By dint of a strong situation,
The posters e'en now have begun
To pull the thing up as "Sensation."

Mr. Punch 'gainst the word and the things
It applies to, his protest would enter:
For the vulgar excitement it brings
May England ne'er prove fitting centre.
If you've got something good, never doubt it
By deeds will avouch its vocation;
And be sure that not talking about it
Is the true way to *make* a "Sensation."

Fig. 3.2 - Anonymous, 'Sense v. Sensation', *The Punch* (July 20, 1861) 31.

Whymper's cause célèbre is certainly one of the most graphic instances of Alpine sensationalism; but it is also a paramount example of the Victorian era tout court, or as *The Punch* would brand the 'age of Sensation' (Fig. 3.2). On balance, Whymper contributed greatly to Alpine history, however, and should not be cast as some overexcitable commentator as some have done. Mid-twentieth-century scholar Ronald Clark rightly reminds us, despite the drama and literary colour employed in his text, Whymper's account was also deeply, sometimes religiously, 'felt and experienced' (Clark 1953, 112).⁶

Baron Conway of Allington (1856-1937; Hansen 2004), art historian and mountaineer, in his conspicuously entitled chapter 'How to See Mountains' in his *The Alps* (1904, 22-45), places Whymper at the same level of Ruskin in his capacity to reveal to his readers something about mountain beauty – encouraging mountains be looked at, as well as climbed, for their own sake. For Conway, Whymper's illustrative drawing capacity makes him the inheritor of

Albrecht Dürer, the sixteenth-century German engraver of the pre-Romantic and the sublime (Luber 2005, 112; Vaughan 1979).⁷ Again, it is possible to observe in Whymper's art and writing, if we believe Conway and Clark, a blurring between the physicality necessitated by mountaineering in the Golden Age and its more introspective and aesthetic dimensions, purported by sensibilities, such as those of the post-Romantic John Ruskin.

If *Scrambles* provided a textual and graphic form of Victorian sensationalism, whether we see it as melancholically subtle or outrightly heroic, showman Albert Smith (1816-1860; Hansen 2004), on the other hand, more vividly and resourcefully provides this discussion a more obviously performative counterpart to Whymper; a counterpart concretely rooted in the playful, which was responsible for 'the popular appropriation of the Alps' (Bevin 2010, 11). Smith was obsessed with mountains, particularly Mont Blanc, from his childhood; once funds allowed, he made the summit himself in 1851. A year later he would open a one-man show on his ascent of at the Egyptian Hall in London's Piccadilly that would run until 1858.

A vast money-maker, with performances to over 200,000 people, and royalty, Smith's entertainment, billed as 'The Ascent of Mont Blanc', was accompanied by moving panoramas and backgrounds (Huhtamo 2013, 215-243), music and a stage garlanded with 'chamois skins, Indian corn, Alpenstocks, vintage baskets, knapsacks, and other appropriate matters', to quote the *Illustrate London News* of the day (1852, 565).⁸ During the interval, Hansen reports, 'Saint Bernard Dogs lumbered through the room with chocolates in barrels under their necks' (Hansen 1995, 305). Smith would also write a book complimenting his adventure, adding to his visual method a textual one, entitled *The Story of Mont Blanc* (1853). Like the show, his lyrical text in this would equally amplify the danger as well as the comedy of events that Smith encountered. The show's success gained him the titles 'Mr. Mont Blanc' and the

‘Baron of Piccadilly’; a popular biographer has described him as ‘one of the greatest showmen of the nineteenth century’ (Fitzsimons 1967, 13).



Fig. 3.3 - Mr Albert Smith's "Ascent of Mont Blanc," at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, 1852, in 'The Ascent of the Mont Blanc', *Illustrated London News* 21, n. 599 (1852) 565. The illustration shows the first less elaborated version of the scenery before the full chalet was built (Huhtamo 2013, 222).

This acknowledgment is all the more sensational considering that neither Smith was the first man to climb Mont Blanc, nor was he the first British person who could have claimed to have summited it. Before his performance, British audiences had already been thrilled by John Richardson Auldjo's (1805-1886) 'narrative' of his own ascent of the mountain in 1827; Auldjo was just the seventh Briton to have climbed Mont Blanc and the nineteenth out of the total. Auldjo's account was perhaps the least pompous and more personal report of the many that circulated in that period, but by far the most dramatic and best known in England before Smith's staged ensemble. If the ascent by Charles Fellows and William Hawes, which preceded Auldjo's by fifteen days, was

recounted in a book published in only fifty copies and intended for a restricted circle of friends, the first edition of Auldjo's *Narrative of an Ascent to the Summit of Mont Blanc* (1828), lavishly illustrated with twenty-two lithographs by J.D. Harding (Fig. 3.4) – 'who appears to the ablest of all our artists in the management of this species of graphic representation', as Josiah Conder decreed in the *Eclectic Review* (1828, 146) – was meant to reach a wider audience; the second, more portable, edition was reprinted four times.

The success of Auldjo's book was due to two complementary factors – the personal tone of the text and the 'animated' outlook of plates. If the images linger on the dangerous and reckless dimensions of the expedition, showing Auldjo and his six guides having breakfast on a bridge made of snow, or leaning over breath-taking precipices, or hanging on ropes in perilous positions, the text accompanying them emphasises Auldjo vulnerability and bodily overreaction. As Robert Macfarlane aptly summarises, 'altitude sickness, hypothermia, snow-blindness and narcolepsy were visited upon him on the way up; heat-stroke, dyspepsia, loss of motor control and eventually total collapse were added to those ailments on the way back down' (Macfarlane 2003, 162–163). Had his six guides not taking care of him, he would have died; and this only for the sake of mountain beauty: 'These rapid alternations of reflected splendour, on a surface so vast and sublimely picturesque, presented a scene of dazzling brilliancy too much almost for the eye to encounter, and such as no powers of language could adequately portray' (Auldjo 1828, 32–33). Sensationalism, vulnerability, aesthetic and ineffability were the ingredients of his success.

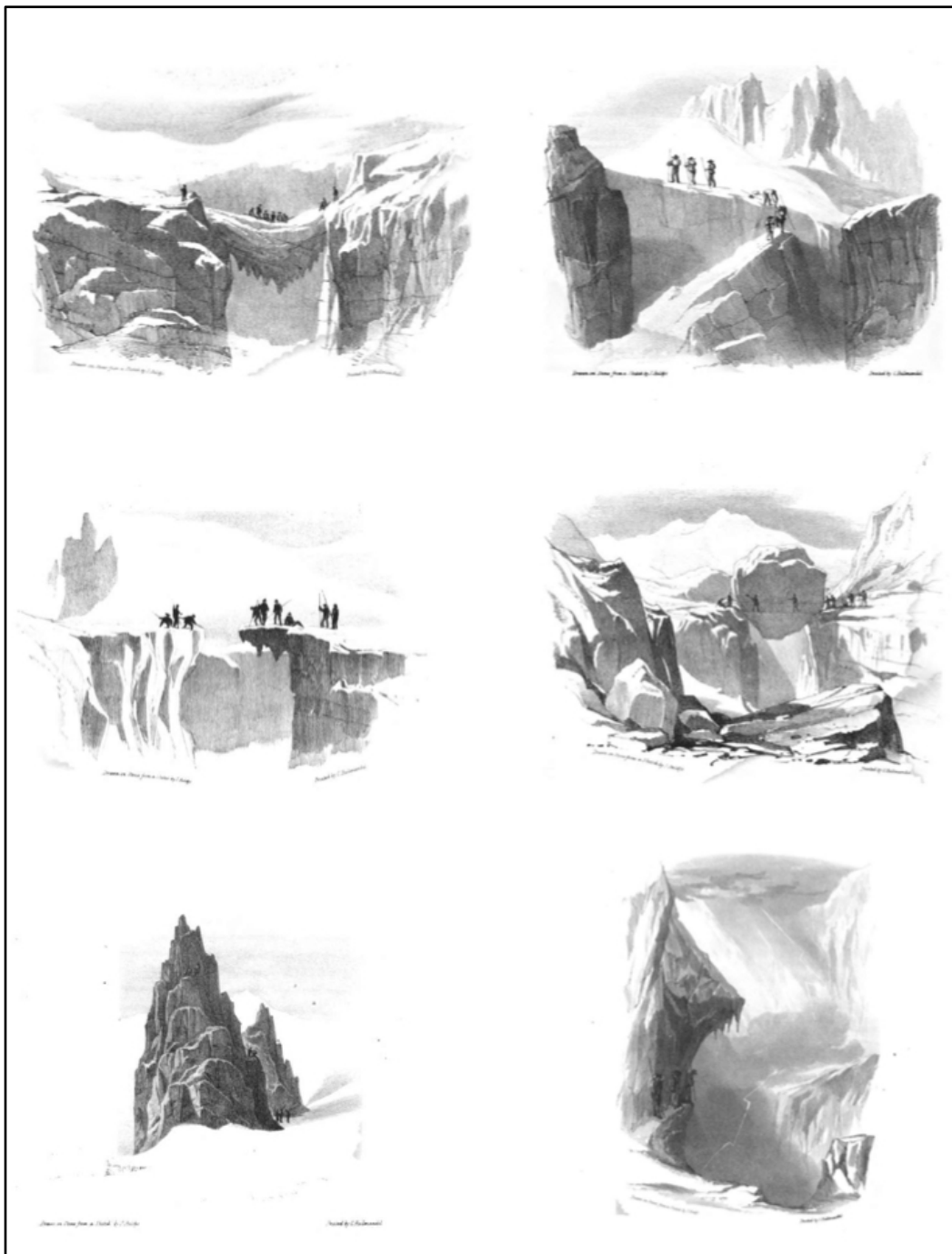


Fig. 3.4 - John Auldjo, *Narrative of an Ascent to the Summit of Mont Blanc, on the 8th and 9th of August, 1827* (1828), lithographies by J.D. Harding, based on drawings by the author.

Auldjo's performance was further enhanced by the polemic that his illustrated book spurred in the press. Macvey Napier, in *The Edinburgh Review*, harshly criticized the work and his illustrations: 'to climb the mountain merely for the sake of a view, and undergo all the toil, and pass through all the dangers

of the expedition, only that you may have it to boast of, deserves very little commendation at the hands of the most lenient judges; while those who look more narrowly at the matter will be led to condemn the proceeding altogether' (Napier 1829, 221). And yet it was precisely that useless madness and the sensation attached to it that attracted the entrepreneurial spirit of Albert Smith, who before even going to Chamonix was already meandering Britain with his 'Alps in a box', sounding the popular appeal of such exploits:

I got up a small moving panorama of the horrors pertaining to Mont Blanc from Mr. Auldjo's narrative – the best of all that I have read; and this I so painted up and exaggerated in my enthusiasm, that my little sister – who was my only audience, but a most admirable one, for she cared not how often I exhibited – would become quite pale with fright (Smith 1853, 6).

Smith would reuse his old magic lantern upon his return from the continent ('One dull evening, however, I routed out my old panorama, and as our little town was entirely occupied at the time with the formation of a literary and scientific institution, I thought I could make a grand lecture about the Alps', *ibid.*, 34), and accompanied his show with a paper based on Auldjo's text ('I selected the most interesting parts of Mr. Auidjo's narrative, and with a few interpolations of my own produced a lecture which, in the town, was considered quite a "hit"', *ibid.*). The immediate success encouraged Smith to tour 'various literary institutions' for some years ('Richmond, Brentford, Guildford, Staines, Hammersmith, Southwark, and other places', *ibid.*), until the he arrived to present his show at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly.

Rising to the challenge of the supposed middle-brow popularism offered by Smith, Ruskin would sourly decry, writing to a correspondent, 'There has been a cockney ascent of Mont Blanc, of which you will doubtless soon hear' (Ring 2000a, 49). Cunningham and Abney still include Smith in their annals of *The*

Pioneers of the Alps, although they reveal themselves in stressing of his 'notoriety' and 'vulgarity': 'One recognizes the Showman in every page', finding it 'impossible to read Mr. Smith's descriptions of scenery, or in fact any of the incidents of the ascent, without having to have a row of footlights' (Cunningham and Abney 1888, 13). Douglas Freshfield, destined to become one of the most admired presidents of the Alpine Club, was taken to the performance as a boy; later in life, he would write, 'I recollect particularly an absurd picture of the Mur de la Côte. I was very much disappointed ten years later by the reality' (Fitzsimons 1967, 148).

The impact of Smith's show transformed the 'passive enjoyment of scenery into a vicarious ascent of Mont Blanc' (Hansen 1995, 306), repeating and disseminating his personal childhood experience when, imbued with the reading of *The Peasants of Chamouni* (1823), the deeds of Captain Sherwill (1825) and the images of John Auldjo, he used to climb Mont Blanc with the help of his 'Alp-box' (compare Fig. 3.4 and Fig. 3.5). Smith's performative approach was particularly appreciated by the middle classes, who sought to live-out some rituals and practices of mountaineering, then already perceived as a vehicle of gentility and status. To the illustrious personalities who promoted mountain beauty, we must add Smith; he enabled, together with Ruskin and Whymper (but by mobilizing different tools), 'the changing perception of the Alps from objects of distant sublime and aesthetic wonder to a landscape better known and understood, but also more widely used and populated and thus (to Ruskin's regret) changed' (Bevin 2010, 9).

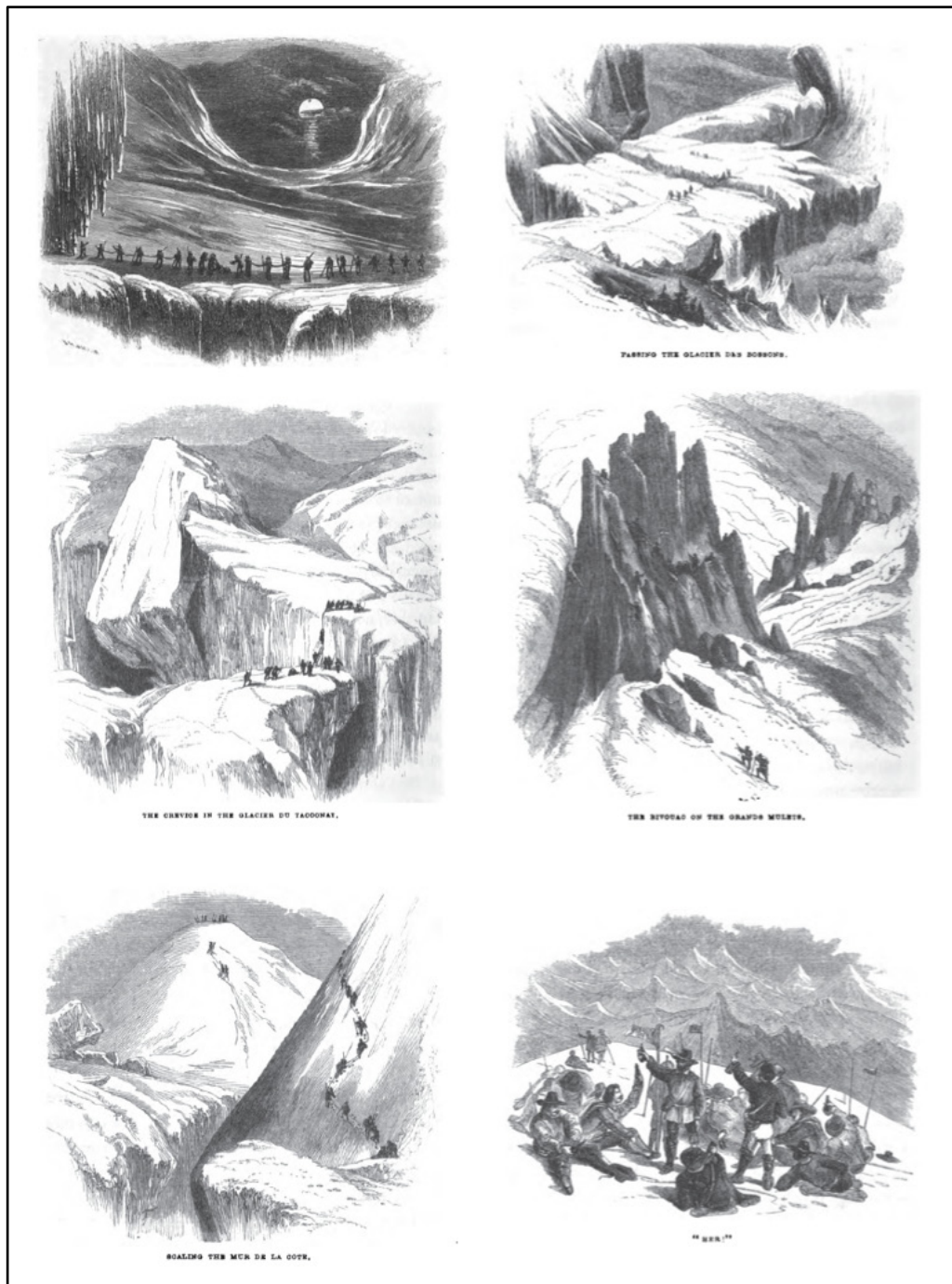


Fig. 3.5 - Albert Smith, *The Story of the Mont Blanc* (1853). The images clearly recalled the ones that accompanies Auldjo's *Narrative of an Ascent to the Summit of Mont Blanc, on the 8th and 9th of August, 1827* (1828) – see also Fig. 3.4.

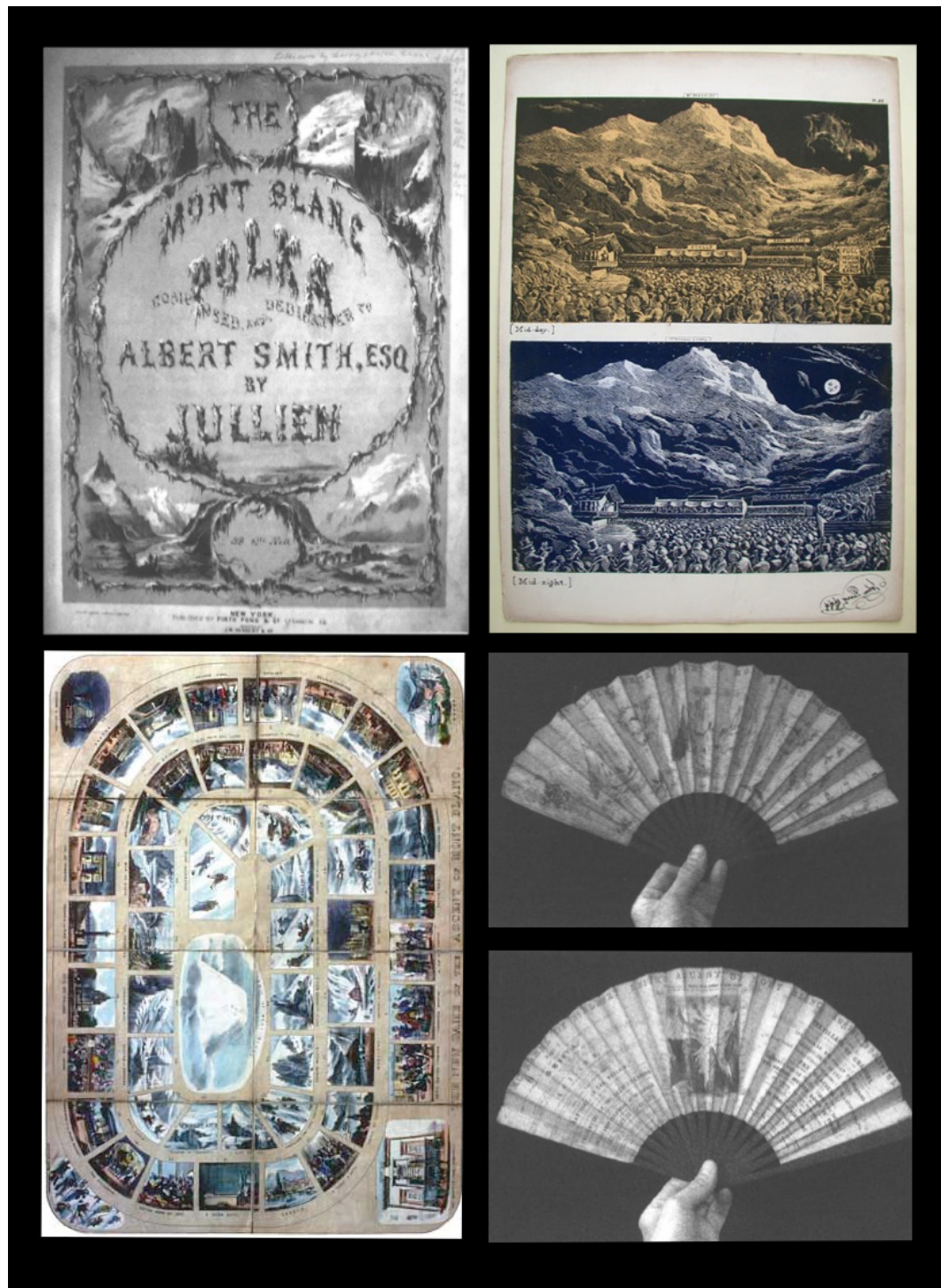


Fig. 3.6 - Ephemera associated with Albert Smith's *The Ascent of Mont Blanc*: Jullien, *The Mont Blanc Polka*, composed and dedicated to Albert Smith, 1852, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland; *Ridiculous Things: Scraps and Oddities*, showing Smith's views of Mont Blanc, Exeter University Library, Bill Douglas Collection; *Paper fan with the program of Albert Smith's Mont Blanc and scenes from William Beverley's panorama* (1852); these fans had a practical function as navigation tool: 'The annexed plan of the ROUTE TO THE SUMMIT OF MONT BLANC will be found useful for reference during the lecture' (Huhtamo 2013, 222).

Ann Colley rightly points to the commercialism associated with Smith's spectacle, along with others like it that had emerged at the same time. 'These distant performances', she argues, 'came down from the heights into exhibition venues and literally walked onto the London stage ... With this descent, the mountains not only left the sublime far behind; they also joined what is now referred to as the culture industry' (Colley 2010, 5). A Victorian version of modern-day film producer, Smith's show marketed music such as the *Mont Blanc Quadrille* and the *Mont Blanc Polka* (Fig. 3.6), moving dioramas and merchandise, such as his routes painted on fans, a portable peep show and an Alpine version of snakes and ladders – *The Game of Mont Blanc* (Ring 2000, 49); all of which enabled the audience to take Mont Blanc home, and reproduce his performance for themselves (Hansen 2013, 175-176). 'Landscape had moved from backdrop to foreground, taking on its own dramatic role in the process' (Darby 2000, 35). In 1855, Charles Greenwood Floyd commented on these events with words that would anticipate Veronica Della Dora's notion of 'traveling landscape-objects' (2009):

Every traveller (we would use the diminutive of tourist, but the epithet implies to our fancy, more a difference of kind than of degree) has seen Mont Blanc. Those who have not been able to go to the mountain have had the mountain by various arts transported to them (Floyd 1855, 1).

Whatever his critics might have proffered, Smith was the 'first to vividly depict the experiences of climbing at such high altitudes to packed audiences back in London' in sharp contrast to the 'cultivated' audiences Ruskin aspired to impress (Bevin 2010, 97; Thomas 2004). The fact that his penchant for a kind of Loutherbourgian melodrama (see Chapter 1, Fig. 1.2) distorted the authenticity of the representation is beside the point; he keyed into a new, much broader urban society that was increasingly eager and able, because of the railways opening up Europe and the Alps to the reach of an Englishman's holiday, to

experience the reality of the Alps ‘outside a relatively narrow social and intellectual elite’ (Ring 2000, 49). In the next chapter we shall see, however, that the Victorian middle-classes, were not to lose complete touch with or be ostracized from the ideas ascribed regularly to elite, as we witnessed in Chapter 1, as they still aspired to an experience or indeed a representation of the sublime, for example, and certainly the picturesque.

To dwell a moment longer on the dichotomy between Ruskin and Smith, so ably analysed by Bevin (2008, 2010), Smith went one step further than Ruskin through his creation of an Alpine ‘theatre’ spectacle. Ruskin’s argument in *Modern Painters* is that Romantic art, especially that of Turner, allows us to enjoy the satisfaction of a literal experience in that the ‘seizure of the mountains’ could arrive ‘through their representation’ (Schama 1995, 494). Smith dramatically conveyed the physicality of his ascent through the direct experience of a mediated performance, which in its dynamic rendered better the forms of mountains than the Romantic ‘pretensions of obscurantism’ (*ibid.*, 505). Smith, then, blurred the physical achievements of mountaineers, such as Wills or Whymper, with the more sedate kind of mountain beauty promoted by Ruskin; his ‘moving-pictures’ compete with Ruskin’s ‘word pictures’ in providing a dramatic image of the Mont Blanc for those who could not travel to the Alps, reaching them from the comfort of a seat in the Egyptian Hall or in their own homes, or via a ‘show in a box’ that they could buy (Schama 1995, 499; Kember 2003; Kember, Plunkett, and Sullivan 2012).

Smith’s board game, dioramas and peep shows acted both as visual devices as well as transportable objects; they provide sound examples of a ‘representation enabling imaginative travelling and a “travelling” landscape in itself’ (Della Dora 2007, 288) – or, more simply, ‘transportable landscapes’. Such objects coincided with the advent of the great exhibitions and the increasing demand for public lectures, which moved beyond ‘bewildering’ science into the

realms of more viably conventional showmanship (Hewitt 2012, 80). Victorian geographical education and popular imagination was not necessarily confined to difficult abstraction, be it conveyed through ‘Turnerian mystery’ or ‘cloudiness’ (Ruskin 1903, 4: 73). George Dixon Abraham (1871–1965, see McConnell 2004a), one the pioneers of rock-climbing in Britain, would note that ‘it is amusing to hear of [Smith’s] early adventures with the diorama, where he tells of going round to various literary institutions “with the Alps in a box”, and how he and his brother used to drive their four-wheeled chaise about the country “with Mont Blanc on the back seat”’ (Abraham 1907, 18). Abraham, too, despite Smith’s sometimes-lowbrow reputation, cannot deny his influence on the promotion of modern mountaineering.⁹

Landscape and the knowledge of it, in this sense, and as Derek Gregory has put it, ‘travels through social practices at large’ (Gregory 1994, 10). Veronica della Dora has also explained that such landscape representations (or enactments) become ‘dynamic *vehicles* for the circulation of place through time and space’ (Della Dora 2007, 293). Golden Age Alpine landscapes, as described here, were also vehicles of wonder and astonishment whereby the geographical limits of an accessible in-box Alpine landscape were magnified. This permits us to ask the same question as Edward Casey: ‘do places have edges?’ (2011, 65). Through their literary and spectacular restaging as a ‘theatre’, the Alps were given during the Golden Age of mountaineering a performative quality responsible for their transportability and transferability of symbolic capital across national borders (Budick and Iser 1996), allowing us to debate Casey’s query above as well as his contention that borders and boundaries ‘possess a certain indeterminate leeway and are absorptive in certain basic respects: they are osmotic, we might say’ (*ibid.*, 72).

A foreign territory, such as the Alpine landscape, became tied to a national discourse of sensationalism that effectively constructed an imagined

topography of the natural landscape with a uniquely British flavour; this allows Jim Ring (2000) to argue that the British ‘made’ the Alps. Cutting across, and perhaps disregarding, national dominions and cultural domains, British mountaineers, and theatregoers alike, were able to discount the notions of place (and even sovereignty) and to challenge clearly demarcated edges of place, by elevating a visualization and materialization of space, whether that was by scaling the ice and rock of the Matterhorn or the Mont Blanc, or by playing a board game that conquered a ‘summit’ on a dining room table.¹⁰ The Alps and Mont Blanc, or at least Smith’s versions of it, were literally grasped in one’s hand, creating a sense of reality through an interactional performance between the optical and tactile, or we could say between the visual and phenomenological, once the exclusive preserve of mountaineers – a performance already anticipated in Shelley’s poem *Mont Blanc*.

Pondering on Casey’s question, Whympers and Smith’s brands of Alpine sensationalism rendered the ‘edges’ of the Alps permeable because they helped transform the object of mountains into a subjective concept perceived through the body; a dynamic ‘idea’ of the Alps rather than an ‘idealized’ view of them, be it embodied in the practice of climbing or holidaying in the mountains themselves, or imagining them as some sensational feature in a book or as some a fantastic spectacle in a theatre. This relationship between ‘text’, ‘image’ and ‘culture’ anticipates what we could style a Golden Age ‘ideology’; a system of interconnected loops of emotional energy, symbols, rituals and practices that through the sensationalist rhetoric described here transforms itself into a matrix of topographic memory.¹¹ The actual ‘place’ of the Alps, and of Mont Blanc or the Matterhorn, is not, in this case, restricted to the lines on a map, because the sensationalist view over ‘space’ and landscape scenery, conceptually more porous and ‘transportable’, seems to have been more sought-after and adhered to instead.

The Playground of Europe
The Golden Age of Mountaineering

To the sensationalist Golden Age portmanteau, illustrated so far, has to be added the writings of probably the most famous personality in British mountaineering Sir Leslie Smith (1832-1904; Bell 2004; Neate 1980, 142). Great Victorian mountaineer, Stephen was equally an esteemed London man of letters, former Cambridge don, editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and father of Virginia Woolf, his impact on mountain appreciation reverberates still in both alpinist and literary circles (Hansen 2013, 3-4; Hill 1981; Sheen 1957). His influential *The Playground of Europe* (1871) appeared in the same year as Whymper's *Scrambles*, and restored, according to Braham, 'a degree of respectability to alpine mountaineering at a period when the sport had not fully recovered from disrepute after the Matterhorn accident' (2004, 108).¹² The level of sophistication active in Stephen's *The Playground of Europe* places its author at the forefront in unravelling the factors contributing to the Golden Age's cultural milieu.

The word 'playground' in his title belies what Stephen really thought about the Alps. He saw them as a 'playground' where leisured intellectuals and academics could climb, but he also revered them as 'sacred' architectonic creations – 'the most noblest of Gothic cathedrals' (Stephen 1871, 69). The Alps, when Stephen eulogizes a pre-industrial, utopian Switzerland, 'were the natural retreat of men disgusted with the existing order of things, profoundly convinced of its rottenness' – 'the love of mountains is intimately connected with all that is noblest in human nature' (*ibid.*, 49, 65). His account, however, is not only limited to mountain philosophy; descriptions of his climbing exploits mix his emotional position with dry humour and satire: 'a man may worship the mountains, and yet have a quiet joke with them when he is wandering all day in their tremendous solitudes ... Joking, however, is, it must be admitted, a

dangerous habit ... I have myself made some very poor witticisms' (*ibid.*, 269). Although some would argue that Stephen's Alpine cathedrals follow on in Ruskin's mould established in *Modern Painters* – that 'the mountains of the earth are its natural cathedrals, or natural altars, overlaid with gold, and bright with brodered work of flowers, and with their clouds resting on them as the smoke of a continual sacrifice' (Ruskin 1903, 4: 457) – this humour sets Stephen apart from Ruskin, with whom he sometimes overtly argues.

Stephen seems to avoid, in *The Playground*, the more affected prose of mountain writing which plunged 'into ecstasies about infinite abysses and overpowering splendours'; when he admired Ruskin's metaphorical gesture of linking 'mountains to archangels lying down in eternal winding-sheets of snow' (*ibid.*, 267), he hardly offers him up as a model; he also criticises Whymper's *Scrambles* for occasionally allowing drama to reign over accuracy.¹³ Whether deliberately drawing attention and pacifically gainsaying Ruskin's ornate style or not, Stephen notes:

Mr. Ruskin has covered the Matterhorn, for example, with a whole web of poetical associations, in language which, to a severe taste, is perhaps a trifle too fine, though he has done it with an eloquence which his bitterest antagonists must freely acknowledge. Yet most humble writers will feel that if they try to imitate Mr. Ruskin's eloquence they will pay the penalty of becoming ridiculous (*ibid.*).

Stephen, who made five first ascents of peaks over 4000m, explored glaciers, and opened new routes (placing his climbing prowess certainly at the same level as Whymper) would similarly elevate his performative style – the style of a mountain connoisseur – over an excessively Ruskinian approach to mountain appreciation in his volume tellingly entitled *Essays on Freethinking and Plainspeaking* (1873). It is also true that Stephen himself, as evidenced in several sections of *The Playground*, falls into the mountain zeal from which he

tries to distance himself. 'The Alps', summarizes Douglas Freshfield, 'were for Stephen a playground', indeed, 'but they were also a cathedral' as much as they were for Ruskin (Lunn 1972, 8).

One important contribution of Stephen can be linked to what has been argued in the first chapter (which established the Grand Tour as a matrix of topographic memory centred on the aesthetic magnetism of the Alps) with regard to two chapters in *The Playground*: 'The Old School' and the 'The New School'. A forerunner to the distinct attitudes pertaining to the dichotomy of 'Mountain Gloom' and 'Mountain Glory' witnessed in the transition between the Neoclassical and Romantic oeuvres in literature and art, Stephen likewise traces the evolution in mountain appreciation from the period of 'frank expressions of horror' to enlightened 'regular and avowed worship of the Alps': 'before the turning-point of the eighteenth century a civilized being might, if he pleased, regard the Alps with unmitigated horror' (Stephen 1871, 41-42). Although, he reminds us, that even in the eighteenth century – the freethinking 'days of Isaac Newton' – Jacob Scheuchzer, a Swiss man of 'some real scientific acquirements' who made tours of the Alps from 1702 to 1711, brought 'forward a quantity of corroborative evidence as to the existence of dragons', divided them into different types 'by a scientific classification' (*ibid.*, 17), and catalogued them 'according to canton' (De Beer 1930, 89).

But differently from Whymper and Smith, who saw modernity spectacularly reaching a zenith within the Golden Age, Stephen argues in his 'Regrets of a Mountaineer' that the sport of mountaineering, which he and his writing so eagerly attempted to promote and accommodate after the Matterhorn disaster, had actually resulted in people risking their 'lives merely from fashion or desire of notoriety' (Stephen 1871, 266). Mountaineering, for Stephen, was able to put one 'at the quiet limit of the world' (Hansen 2013, 28), echoing a Burkean version of the sublime (Duro 2013). But the Alps had become such a popular

destination by the time of *The Playground* that Stephen was able to argue that 'Innumerable tourists have done all that tourists can do to cocknify (if that is the right derivative of cockney) the [Alpine] scenery' (Stephen 1871, 273). He criticizes those

stupid and unpoetical mountaineers ... persons, I fancy, who 'do' the Alps; who look upon the Lake of Lucerne as one more task ticked off from their memorandum-book, and count up the list of summits visible from the Görnegrat without being penetrated with any keen sense of sublimity. And there are mountaineers who are capable of making a pun on the top of Mont Blanc—and capable of nothing more (*ibid.*, 283).

The very person who had christened the Alps a 'playground', ironically helping also to promote them as such, came to resonate with Ruskin's own criticism of the Alpine tourist who played at being the pseudo-mountaineer in-line with the fashionably new, Golden Age mountain 'mania':

the Alps themselves, which your own poets used to love so reverently, you look upon as soaped poles in a bear-garden, which you set yourselves to climb and slide down again, with "shrieks of delight". When you are past shrieking, having no human articulate voice to say you are glad with, you fill the quietude of their valleys with gunpowder blasts, and rush home, red with cutaneous eruption of conceit, and voluble with convulsive hiccough of self-satisfaction (Ruskin 1903, 18: 89–90).

The 1850s saw faster and more widely accessible means of travel to the Alps; furthermore, the Alps became popular as a destination by the likes of Albert Smith's Mont Blanc shows. This opening-up, however, allowed Ruskin and Stephen to see places like Chamonix and Zermatt changing from attractive mystical sanctuaries into appalling touristic playgrounds. Popular appeal of the Alps, and the corresponding influx of tourists, was interfering, therefore, with the aesthetic quality that had so drawn Ruskin and Stephen into their respective

interests in mountain scenery (Bevin 2010, 30, 76; Ring 2000, 61). It is only the bona-fide mountaineer, according to Stephen, who is able to go a critical 'step further', beyond that of the 'ordinary tourist', who only tries to appreciate mountain beauty comfortably from a hotel window. 'The qualities which strike every sensitive observer', writes Stephen, 'are impressed upon the mountaineer with tenfold force and intensity' because the mountaineer, distinct from the passive tourist, is able to engage physically with the mountains, tangibly facing their dangers and sheer magnitude (Stephen 1871, 282). Stephen's account of the aesthetic appreciation of mountains is fused here with a strong conviction that corporeal action is able to enhance mountain beauty. Despite the attempt of Ann Colley to confute the common view of seeing Ruskin as the advocator of a kind of mountain beauty cast in a distant view (Colley 2009), Ruskin and Stephen have been seen as pioneering respectively a representational and a non-representational notion of landscape (Morrison 2009). In fact, their difference appears more nuanced.

To clarify, Stephen argues that 'if mountains owe their influence upon the imagination in a great degree to their size and steepness, and apparent inaccessibility – as no one can doubt that they do, whatever may be the explanation of the fact that people like to look at big, steep, inaccessible objects – the advantages of the mountaineer are obvious' (Stephen 1871, 281). It is only through mountaineering, physically persevering to reach the summit of a peak itself, rather than through gazing upon it, as some inert tourist from the valley's bottom, that the mountaineer is able to grasp the meaning of the mountain. Mountaineering, for example, 'enables one to have what theologians would call an experimental faith in the size of mountains ... He measures the size, not by the vague abstract term of so many thousand feet, but by the hours of labour, divided into minutes—each separately felt—of strenuous muscular exertion' (*ibid.*, 276, 281). Critically linking the meaning of a mountain with 'thinking like

a mountain', to borrow from ecologist Aldo Leopold, can be useful because it helps validate Stephen's proposal that the sacredness and mysticism of mountains can be tapped into by the practice of mountaineering itself (Hansen 2013, 28; Flader 1994; Mathieu 2011).

By taking 'thinking like a mountain' as a metaphor for the space where the encounter between man and the natural landscape occurs (Hansen 2013, 27–29), this image acquires further clarity if compared with the question Stephen famously asked: 'Where does Mont Blanc end, and where do I begin?' (Stephen 1909, 296; Hollis 2010). We can thus deduce that Stephen's mountain philosophy attempts to answer the unanswerable question by drawing on both 'physical and intellectual energies' (Stephen 1871, 267). Nearing the end of *The Playground*, Stephen offers some advice to those keen to take up mountaineering that further clarifies the interaction between the actual reality of mountaineering as a practice and the virtual reality of mountaineering as a style of thinking. Stephen's suggestions include, of course, taking a guide, avoiding obvious dangers and building-up bodily strength; but occasionally he suggests the postulant climber to find his own way by attempting, like him, to think like a mountain: 'You learn still more to interpret the real meaning of the sights before you. The mountains, for example, will grow daily in apparent size. The little white or purple patches which said nothing to you at first will become full of poetical meaning' (*ibid.*, 320).¹⁴

Stephen's ultimate 'regret' and sadness, however, comes from the fact that his encroaching middle-age had begun to negate the acrobat-like qualities that he once found in himself, so unavoidably required to keep the balance 'at the top of a living pyramid' (*ibid.*, 264). 'I wander at the foot of the gigantic Alps', he writes, 'and look longingly to the summits, which are apparently so near, and yet I know that they are divided from me by an impassable gulf' (*ibid.*, 265). Gazing up at mountaineers on Mont Blanc as 'black dots' through a telescope he

'lingered about the spot with a mixture of pleasure and pain, in the envious contemplation of my fortunate companions' (*ibid.*, 265-266). He judges himself still capable of climbing Mont Blanc, but he admits that his physical ability is waning – 'sinking, so to speak, from the butterfly to the caterpillar phase' – doomed, it would seem, to be a 'non-climbing animal' henceforth (*ibid.*, 298).

To the climber familiar with 'making' his landscape through a direct engagement with the mountain, mountain beauty, instead, could only be embodied in a gaze; and yet the mountain becomes a shrine of memories that cannot – and regrettably so – be revived through the eye alone. There where Shelley encourages the poet to aspire to bodily engagement with the landscape, Stephen finds it impossible for a 'mere athletic machine, however finely constructed, to appeal very deeply to one's finer sentiments' (*ibid.*, 263). His regret apparently comes from the fact that he cannot be anymore in a such position of contact with the natural landscape to provide an answer his question: 'Where does Mont Blanc end, and where do I begin?'. A mountaineer without a mountain is like painter without a brush or a musician without an instrument.¹⁵

Approaching the age of sixty, the photograph of Stephen at Grindelwald (Fig. 3.7) shows him looking longingly at an Alpine scene, a scene for us unknown and obscure, from a window. Perhaps, he looks at the Grindelwald glacier or the Wetterhorn; his expression, in profile, half turned from us, shows a stern nobility but also a sadness. Taken by Gabriel Loppé, a well-received photographer, painter and alpinist (Borgeaud 2002; Liabeuf, Fernex de Mongex, and Verlinden 2005), it is conjecturable that the image depicts Stephen lamenting that he is no longer able to be on the mountain itself, unable to interact with the metaphoric-physical space that the interrelation between the mountain and the mountaineer allowed or indeed requires. He cannot 'think' like a mountain anymore, or engage, as Hansen has put it, with the active

‘network of intersubjective relationships between people and the natural world’; he can only, instead, think ‘about’ the mountain from afar (Hansen 2013, 27). Has Stephen become the fearful person he knew he would, as described in *The Playground of Europe*? The erstwhile mountaineer who is ‘really conscious that they have lost something which they can never regain’? His ‘Elysian fields’ are so close in the view from the window, yet they are so far and forbidden to him because his body cannot interact with them anymore (Stephen 1871, 264-265).



Fig. 3.7 - Gabriel Loppé, *Leslie Stephen at Grindelwald*, 1889, Archive of the Alpine Club, London.

In comparing Loppé’s image of Stephen above (Fig. 3.7) with a much more famous image of an alpinist in the mountains, Caspar David Friedrich’s *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (‘Wanderer above a sea of fog’; Hamburg,

Hamburger Kuntshalle, 1818; Mitchell 1984), now something of a cliché of German Romanticism, further useful conclusions about the Golden Age can be made. The foregrounded wanderer in Friedrich's image has reached some alpine promontory, his back to us, as he glances at vast Alpine vista before him, in the background of the painting.¹⁶ The Romantic topoi of natural landscape and sublime grandeur exude from this image; it emphasizes both the 'radical specificity of nature, and the constructive role of an intervening subjectivity' (Ireton and Schaumann 2012, 88). Along with the wandering protagonist in Friedrich's painting, we too are at the brink of some horrific but delightful precipice as clouds swirl around in the infinite spaces between the peaks; he and the painting's viewers, albeit vicariously, are subjected to something akin to Burke's notion of the sublime. The wanderer is awe-struck, as we might also be – it represents a moment of illumination, or enlightenment, in the face of nature (Stückelberger 2010, 48-49).

Landscape, for the Romantics, as we have seen (see Chapter 1), became a fashionable discourse because it allowed combining the specific with the universal, an effect Friedrich also seems to achieve with his wanderer image. The focus and impact of the painting fluctuates between object and subject, without 'forsaking a sense of reality or reducing the sense of divine power' (Mitchell 1984, 459). But in Loppé's photograph no actual landscape is seen, only Stephen looking at what is potentially a landscape, perhaps just as full of drama as seen and felt in Friedrich's, but this drama it is not as embodied by Stephen's portrait in the same way as it is in 'Der Wanderer'. The photograph, instead, asks us to project the idea of the mountain scene, and all that might contain, aesthetically and imaginatively, onto our imagination as well as on Stephen's. In this way the photograph supports the suggestion that the Golden Age mentality was not all about sensationalism – in the sense manifested by

Whymper and Smith; it also involved more subtle connotations towards contemplative 'sensation', beyond what is simply seen, staged or represented.

Such mentalities were already well rehearsed in the phase of Romanticism by philosophers, poets, and, as Friedrich shows here, also painters. This sentiment is certainly revived in Stephen's *The Playground* when he reflects upon the later Victorian Golden Age of mountaineering. Loppé's image of Stephen, however, asks us to go further because it not only requires a definite contemplation of landscape on our part, as the Romantics would have us do, but its 'regret' reminds us that aesthetic beauty of mountain landscapes can be enhanced only by being in touch with the mountain itself; a dimension of appreciation the Romantics only started to consider.¹⁷ The overarching motif of Stephen's *The Playground* obligates Romantic imagination to be combined with muscular physicality and materiality, in order to 'know' and 'do' an Alpine landscape: an idea (in)visibly reiterated by 'sensitivity' in Loppé's portrait.¹⁸ Going back to Shelley's *Mont Blanc*, it makes sense, therefore, that Stephen would include in 'The New School' of mountain appreciation the statement, 'Shelley's poetry is in the most complete harmony with the scenery of the higher Alps' (Stephen 1871, 62), with all its burgeoning poetic illusions towards landscape embodiment.

Geographers subscribing to the non-representational aspects of landscape, following Merleau-Ponty (1962), promote Stephen as the herald of an appreciation of mountains that veers from a visual to a kinaesthetic mode of perception (Morrison 2009). Like Stephen, Merleau-Ponty seems to understand that knowledge about self and the environment is enhanced through the inter-sensory relationship between the body and the object external to it. But objects are equal parts in the system of understanding the world: 'When I look at the lamp on my table, I attribute to it not only the qualities visible from where I am, but also those which the chimney, the walls, the table can "see" (as mirrors of

other objects)' (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 68); the 'unclimbable rock-face', likewise, has 'no meaning for anyone who is not intending to surmount [it]' (*ibid.*, 436).

The heuristic affinity with Stephen is clear when he claims 'every step of an ascent has a beauty of its own, which one is quietly absorbing even when one is not directly making it a subject of contemplation, and that the view from the top is generally the crowning glory of the whole' (Stephen 1871, 290). This passage chimes well with Merleau-Ponty's thesis because here, as in other quoted examples, Stephen attempts to move beyond perceptual frameworks that had allowed the mind and eye to triumph over corporeal and bodily engagement with the environment, which had, up until Stephen, generally dominated the discourse on mountain appreciation. The 'glory' of the summit position is not only forged through abstract distance, but it is, instead, achieved by attaching visual perception to the realities of the material setting.¹⁹

Embodied perception and recourse to action is an important feature of the Golden Age as well as having a role in the formation of the third matrix of topographic memory, to be re-circulated in the Dolomites. It is often overlooked in mountain literature, which has traditionally celebrated the apparently unbounded, Romantic ability of the mind to outdo the constraints inherent in the individual body and the landscape itself. As equally important to this matrix, but in some ways part of the dominating intellectual rhetoric that has drowned out the argument for embodied perception I have presented here in this section, is the organizational impact of the Alpine Club, of which Stephen and Whympers were members, and to which the discussion turns next.

The Alpine Club Orthodoxy

The subtle invocation of embodiment in *The Playground of Europe* teased out above has generally been obscured in mountaineering literature by the sensational masculine and imperial rhetoric that dominated Golden Age

symbolism (Hansen 1995). The more lucid account of this ponderous interpretation of Victorian mountaineering is Peter Hansen's article on Albert Smith, further developed in his doctoral dissertation of 1991 (Hansen 1991). In reworking his thesis into a book, Hansen has veiled these aspects (Hansen 2013). His scope here is wider in range than in the dissertation, and his argument, rather than revolving around the Golden Age alone and its alleged drive for vertical conquest, focuses instead on the contribution of mountaineering to the establishment of a modern mentality. The relation between competitiveness and masculinity, for instance, is presented here in a more nuanced way – as a matter of 'competitive masculinities' to be negotiated at the level of different cultural practices in the encounter with the mountain: those performed by the mountaineer, the hunter, the naturalist, and, more importantly the mountain guide (Hansen 2013, 86; Hansen 1999; Ortner 1999).

These elements are, nonetheless, important to identify the Golden Age as a matrix of topographic memory to frame the British 'invention' of the Dolomites; for our purpose, they are readily seen in operation through the framework provided by the Alpine Club. Founded in London in 1857, a year before Albert Smith's Mont Blanc show-run ended, the organization was the first of its kind (it was *the* Alpine Club, not the British Alpine Club and the model for all others that followed),²⁰ and operated to encapsulate the very spirit of the age: 'It was obvious that a group of like-minded men would form themselves into a club whose members would meet at pre-arranged intervals to discuss the technical aspects of their interest, to exchange information and, if the record of human nature stands for anything, to spur themselves on to further efforts' (Clark 1953, 78).

Beyond Hansen's book, the remarkable series of scholarly and semi-scholarly accounts recently published stresses the link between manliness, competitiveness, character-building and imperialistic drive in a bolder way. A

cursory look at their titles suffices alone to rehearse the argument: *Mountaineers: Great Tales of Bravery and Conquest* (Douglas et al. 2011); *“Blazing the Way for Others Who Aspire”: Western Mountaineering Clubs and Whiteness, 1890-1955* (LaRocque 2009); *Imperial Ascent: Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire* (Bayers 2003); *Mapping Adventurous Men: Masculinity in Representations of War, Mountaineering, and Science* (Buescher 2003); *Vertical Margins: Mountaineering and the Landscapes of Neoimperialism* (Ellis 2001); *Killing Dragons: The Conquest of the Alps* (Fleming 2001); *Mountain Men: A History of the Remarkable Climbers and Determined Eccentrics Who First Scaled the World’s Most Famous Peaks* (Conefrey and Jordan 2002; see also Taylor 2006). This approach, also possibly allegiant to a distinct market strategy, neglects in part the equally relevant mysterious, ecstatic and obsessive components that tinted the encounter with mountain scenery during the Golden Age, aptly evoked in the titles of another series studies: *When the Alps Cast Their Spell: Mountaineers of the Alpine Golden Age* (Braham 2004); *Victorians in the Mountains: Sinking the Sublime* (Colley 2010); *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (Macfarlane 2003); *Mystery, Beauty, and Danger: The Literature of the Mountains and Mountain Climbing Published in English Before 1946* (Bates 2000). Distinct to these, other accounts focus instead on the mountaineer as a writer, highlighting another important aspect of the Golden Age (Freshfield 1875, 182–183; Coolidge 1893): *Writing the Ascent: Narrative and Mountaineering Accounts* (Allec 2009); *A Rope of Writers: A Look at Mountaineering Literature in Britain* (Wilson 2006); *Mountaineering and Its Literature* (Neate 1980).²¹

It is true, however, that even if Albert Smith embodied both spirits (‘Every step I took that day on the road was as on a journey to fairy-land’, 1853, 32), in the ‘golden’ years after his show ended, ‘mountaineering developed into an aggressive, masculine sport under the institutional aegis of the Alpine Club ... to

facilitate association among those who [possessed] a similarity of taste' (Hansen 1995, 309). The thematic agenda forged by Mont Blanc is important here because it provides a link between the second, scientific and geological matrix, outlined in the previous chapter, and the one revealed here through the deeds of the Golden Age. Edinburgh scientist, James David Forbes (1809-1868; Smart 2004), for instance, benefits this link (Forbes 1900); written in 1843, his book acts as a prerequisite to the exploits of Albert Smith and Edward Whymper in the development of mountaineering as a popular sensation (White 2007). The Alpine Club institutionalised mid-Victorian mountaineering, just as Ruskin – and later Stephen – had made it aesthetically and philosophically worthwhile. Forbes, on the other hand, 'provides, chronologically, the link between the world of Saussure and the world of Victorian mountaineers ... the transformation which so often took place in those scientists who came to the mountains to study and who stayed to worship' (Clark 1953, 40). A transformation, which by the mid-nineteenth century would have secured the meaning of the phenomenon as one of 'climbing mountains and exploring the Alps for personal or recreational experiences instead of scientific adventures', which was particularly prevalent among the middle classes and bourgeoisie (Ireton and Schaumann 2012, 232).

Forbes, one of the first honorary members of the Alpine Club (in 1859), established the circumstances whereby the sporting potential of the Alps, sport being the newly introduced dimension, could be combined with their geological aspects. It was Forbes, for example, who 'first began to appreciate the mountains not only as an arena in which he might tilt against scientific unknowns, but also as a source of purely non-scientific wonder' (Clarke 1953, 43). In 1839, Forbes made two trips to the Alps, first to complete a circuit of Monte Viso and second to inspect the Veneon Valley in the Dauphiné Alps, resulting in the publication of *Travels through the Alps of Savoy* (Forbes 1900

[1843]), arguably providing the textbook exemplary of the Golden Age mentality. Not content to simply map, survey or test the mineralogy of the landscape he found, his language is, instead, rather more indicative of what would later come to inspire the first generation of Alpine Club members.

Happy the traveller who, content to leave to others the glory of counting the thousands of leagues of earth and ocean they have left behind them, established in some mountain shelter with his books, starts on his first day's walk amongst the Alps in the tranquil morning of a long July day, brushing the early dew before him, and, armed with his staff, makes for the hill-top (begirt with ice or rock as the case might be), when he sees the field of his summer's campaign spread out before him, its wonders, its beauties, and its difficulties, to be explained, to be admired, and to be overcome (Forbes 1900, 14).

Forbes' publisher would later reprint the specific section on Mont Blanc from this volume in 1855 as *The Tour of Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa* as a separate entity (Forbes 1855). This re-edition provides further clues not only to appreciate the turn from scientific to sportive mountaineering, but also to unravel one of the first accounts of the combination between bravery and wonder.

The 1853 note the publisher sent to Forbes regarding this repackaging, found by Peter Hansen in the St. Andrews University Library, reveals a changing in focus from hard science to more contemplative but also sportive drives in the approach to mountaineering – 'wonders' and 'difficulties' to be 'admired' and 'overcome' (Hansen 1991, 78); the publisher was no doubt keen to exploit here the celebrity and mythic status the mountain itself had acquired already. Forbes' language is indicative of competition – mountain landscapes are attractive because they allow for a challenge to both mind and body.

Other sections, which concerned the agency of glaciers, or those explaining the leading thought on geological phenomena, were to be excluded from this newly revised and much abridged version. Perhaps in an attempt to satisfy the by then changing, less scientific demands of their reading audience – no doubt influenced by the popularity of Smith's Mont Blanc sensationalistic show that had just opened – the publisher James Tait Black, wrote to Forbes:

The scientific details which precede and follow this central portion of the work [on Mont Blanc] are doubtless uninteresting and undesired by many who would like both to read and possess the more popular part, and the number of tourists who now visit this district of Switzerland annually is such as to warrant a republication that many of them would value such a work (as this would make) as a companion volume to their guidebooks (Hansen 1991, 77).

In the cultural space opened up by Albert Smith's Mont Blanc show, the Alpine Club furthered Forbes' Alpine summer 'campaigns' by combining 'contemporary connotations of gentility and masculinity with the imagined imperial geography of the Victorian middle classes' (Hansen 1995, 322; see also White 2007).

Mountaineering of the Golden Age, then, 'helped to legitimize exploration and the broader imperial expansion by transforming imperialism from an abstraction into something tangible and readily accessible to ambitious professional men' (*ibid.*). The adventurous accounts and stories, both real and imagined, constituted the 'energizing myth of imperialism', motivating Englishmen 'to go out into the world and explore, conquer and rule' (Green 1979, 3). Whether or not these men actually went to the Alps to conquer peaks is beside the point; the public were content in the knowledge that British mountaineers were leading the field in this regard. Even if fictionalized or fantasized about, the British supremacy in this regard was confirmed.

Take for example Dazeill's argument that Sir Everard im Thurn's successful ascent of Mount Roraima in British Guiana (1884) inspired Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lost World* (1912). Here we are offered a link between British foreign policy and the literary and symbolic expression of imperialist and Darwinian passions (and anxieties) that emerged in the mid-Victorian period. The Victorian enclosing of geographical space through science and often adventurous exploration – take the search for the mystic source of the Nile by David Livingstone, for example – celebrated British exploits overseas. The Royal Geographical Society, founded in 1830, supported such global expeditions whose institutional aims overlapped somewhat with those of the Alpine Club (Hansen 1991, 117; Jones 2005). The reality of these overseas adventures were simultaneously mirrored in the prose of the emerging Victorian adventure novel, and other exciting 'Lost World' literary scenarios, exemplified by the works of Conan Doyle.

But this Golden Age combination of sensationalism and imperialism says something also about the geographical discourse and the production of knowledge that attempted to bond and blur known and unknown territorial space with imagination, without discounting realities of the geographies of discovery, the history of scientific enquiry, or indeed colonial aspiration (Livingstone 1995; Livingstone and Withers 2011). An examination of im Thurn's account of his expedition reveals, as one example, 'the way in which an individual narrative of a colonial scientific expedition could be transformed into a fictional narrative of adventure shaped to appeal to a broad reading public at the imperial metropolis' (Dalziell 2002, 152). The British conquest of the natural world, whether it was achieved by first ascents, in fiction, or on the stage, came to symbolize the British preoccupation with imperial domination of the other. Ascents from Mont Blanc to the Matterhorn were consumed as a matter of national importance because mountains came to represent,

symbolically, national strength and masculinity, or, as Simon Schama puts it, 'vertical empires, cerebral chasms' (1995, 463). Mountaineering in the Alps became in the Golden Age 'a form of social climbing, a means of solidifying professional connections on the vertical playing field' (Hollis 2010, 18).

Hansen, again, concurs with Schama's sentiment in that the 'acceptance of a popular imperial culture in the later nineteenth century did not occur *ex novo*; it was built on the invention of cultural practices such as mountaineering in the mid-Victorian decades' (Hansen 1995, 323). Mountain ascents became a paradigm for Britain's colonial mission, and mountaineering the sport through which the moral and physical strength that it required could be demonstrated. This mission was palpable at the level of both the Nation and the Individual; the results were the imagined summit garnered from a page of a book as much as it was the actual summit achieved by a member of the mountaineering community. As Felix Driver has rightly suggested, a two-pronged approach involving both the symbolic and the actual is the more profitable route to understanding the creation of geographical knowledge, as well as for interpreting and executing historical geography more generally (Driver 1992, 37). Take, for instance, the following statement in an article entitled 'Mountaineering: The Alpine Club', in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* of October 1859:

The sporting [mountaineering] passion exists to a greater or less degree, in some shape or other, in the breast of very genuine British man ... While France, actually more old-fashioned in her ways, still pants for that military fame of which the world has heard so much before, Great Britain strives for newer and bloodless laurels, and seeks, according to the Creator's sanction, to assert the supremacy of Man less over his brother than over material Nature (*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 1859, 456 and 470).

Following Driver, we usefully see the meaning of this statement effectively combine both symbolic and physical reality in an holistic fashion rather than an oppositional one; in this case the 'representation' of a patriotic drive towards conquering the Alps (ahead and over the French) with motivational, almost quasi-religious overtones towards the reality or 'presentation' of going out and 'doing' the mountain materially itself. Perhaps somewhat haughtily put, mountaineering in this instance is actually set above any contest between nations; it is about pitching Nature against Man, even if nationalism played a significant role in the tradition of the Golden Age and Alpine Club. The moral and 'bloodless laurels' to be sought by man are not to be found in warring with 'his brother' but in peaceful, honorable battles against the realities of challenging mountainous landscapes.

The patriotism displayed by its members, despite the virtuous moral high ground depicted in the quote above, often bombastic in tone, meant that the cohort of 'the Alpine Club focused their energies', indeed, 'on the completion of first ascents' (Hansen 1995, 315). Such was the success of this Golden Age rhetoric that between 1854 and 1865, of the thirty-nine peaks of over 13,000 feet listed as being first ascended in that period, British climbers 'can claim no less than thirty-one' (Irving 1955, 63). Concomitant with Ring's thesis that British mountaineers could claim to have dominated and 'made the Alps' (2000), the events of the Golden Age further 'created a climate in which middle-class men elevated the exploits of athletes and the adventures of mountaineers into cultural symbols of British masculinity, patriotism, national character, and imperial power' attributing the proliferation of first ascents 'to the English-British national character' (Hansen 1995, 313; 315).

Likewise, Macfarlane has pointed to the Victorian mountaineer's belief that 'climbing a mountain provided confirmation of one's strength, an affidavit of pluck, and potency, an assurance of resourcefulness, self-sustenance, and

manhood' (Macfarlane 2003, 91).²² Emanating from a British perspective, nonetheless, Arnold Lunn argued, in his early history of the Golden Age, that despite the hiring and just acknowledgement of the contribution of Swiss Alpine guides to their assumed glory it was left to British mountaineers to 'transform mountaineering into a popular sport' (Lunn 1914, 143). 'But', writes Lunn, 'even those who owed the greater part of their success to their guides were inspired by the same enthusiasm which, unlike the lonely watchfires of earlier pioneers, kindled a general conflagration' (*ibid.*). The reliance on guides does not detract from club members' achievements; 'it was they', as the weighted but plausible argument followed, 'who provided the initiative' in this transformation (Braham 2004, 21).

The symbolic and material implications of the orthodoxy promoted by the Alpine Club was determined in some ways by the criteria for membership. Far from being elitist or aristocratic in its configuration, as the privileged community of travellers on the Grand Tour was the century before, the club was markedly professional and middle-class. Eligibility for election necessitated a potential member to be able to demonstrate experience of climbing in the Alps 'or evidence of literary or artistic accomplishments related to mountains' (Hansen 1995, 310); although such requirements clearly disadvantaged the working classes who may have enjoyed Smith's show at the Egyptian Hall but certainly lacked the necessary resources to embark on a travel to the Alps.²³ Early membership comprised men from the legal and financial professions, the civil service and the church, university dons and schoolmasters, with the majority being well educated, having obtained a university degree from Oxford, Cambridge or London. 'By the later nineteenth century', however, 'barristers and gentlemen with landed estates or independent wealth declined in number in the club, while doctors and businessmen – especially merchants and engineers – became more prominent' (*ibid.*, 311), confirming that the Alpine

Club's sociological makeup remained generally middle-class throughout the nineteenth century.

Hansen highlights another important but rarely discussed dimension of the Alpine Club's social composition: 'The men of the Alpine Club embraced manliness and rugged gentility in its many contemporary forms – wearing beards, *mens sana in corpore sano* (a sound mind in body and soul), muscular masculinity, and athleticism in schools and universities – but if this diverse group shared anything besides a passion for muscularity and mountains, it was a position on the margins of the established Church of England' (Hansen 2013, 183).²⁴



Fig. 3.8 - Joseph Pennell (1857-1926), *Guides on a Cloudy Day at the Riffel*, lithography, printed in (Mummery 1895, 324).

Mercantile and business-minded members were often Quakers; Wills was a Unitarian, for example, Whympers a Baptist, Ball a Roman Catholic, and Stephen an Evangelical turned agnostic. This non-conformist dimension of the Alpine Club, particularly of some of its most prominent members, reflected, according

to Hansen, a 'Christian socialism' and 'cross-class brotherhood shared by middle-class British climbers and the peasant guides of the Alps in the 1850s' (*ibid.*). This disposition was allegedly also mirrored in the interactions between British mountaineers and their guides (Fig. 3.8), which were not conducted as cold business transactions, but tended instead to stimulate the creation of close, long-lasting friendships (Hansen 1999).

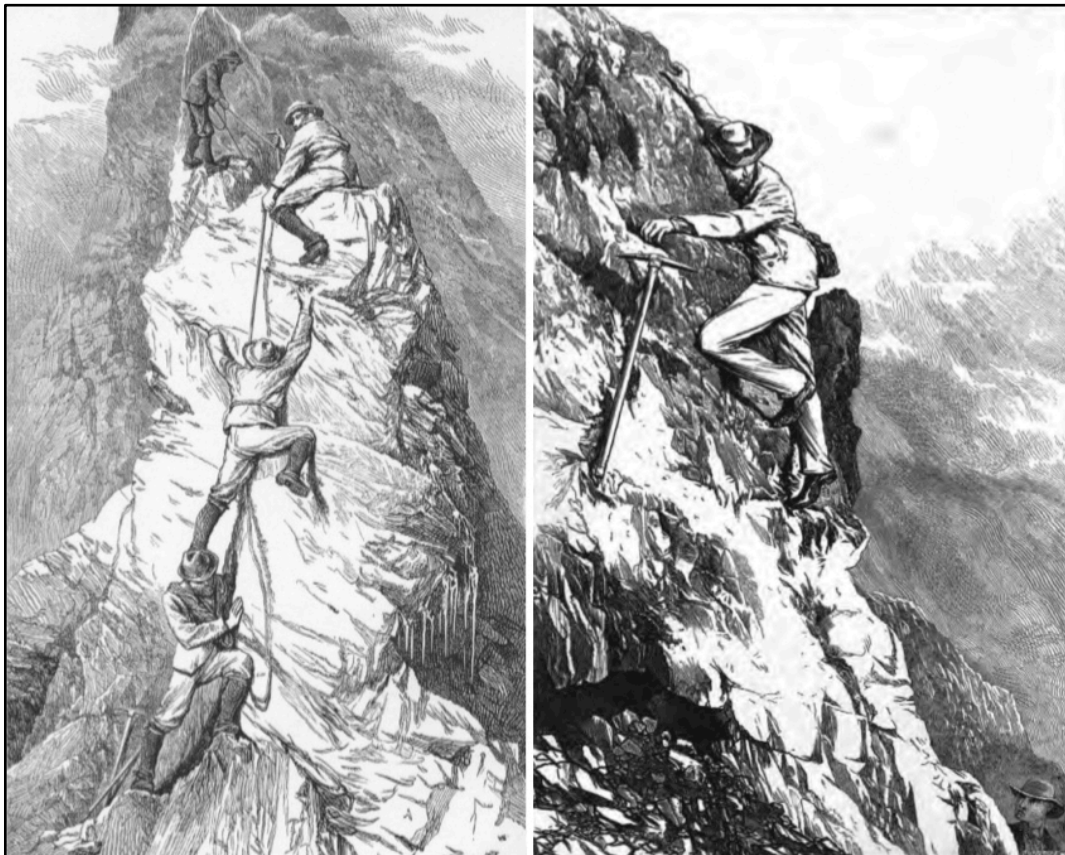


Fig. 3.9 - Climbing with guides (left) and without guides (right). Left: *Ascent of the Rothhorn*, from Leslie Stephen, *The Playground of Europe*, 1871, frontispiece plate. Right: *Girdlestone with his 'seventeen years old, fairly strong and very spirited' pupil Hargreave (lower right corner), descending the Sella, without ropes and guides*, from Arthur Gilbert Girdlestone, *The High Alps Without Guides*, 1870, frontispiece plate, see p. 53: 'Turning round I looked below; there all was steep smooth rock down the couloir at first, and then a slope of debris'.

Alpine guides constituted in fact a fundamental component of the style of mountaineering sponsored by the Alpine Club. Even the most experienced and prominent members consider their employment as almost mandatory; Douglas

Freshfield, for instance, arrived to the point of labelling their involvement as the 'Grindelwald or Chamonix orthodoxy' (Freshfield 1875, 300). The practice of climbing without guides, which became increasingly popular after the provocative publication of Rev. Arthur Gilbert Girdlestone's (1842-1908) *The High Alps Without Guides: Being a Narrative of Adventures in Switzerland, Together with Chapters on the Practicability of Such Mode of Mountaineering, and Suggestions for Its Accomplishment* (1870, Fig. 3.9), was largely discouraged and not seen as the method endorsed by the Club; despite the fact that already in 1855 Charles Hudson and Edward Shirley Kennedy had proudly climbed the Mont Blanc without guides (Hudson and Kennedy 1856). In fact, until the end of the century, the Club's official guide for travellers in the Alps, John Ball's *Hints and Notes Practical and Scientific for Travellers in the Alps* (1899), continued to provide hints and advises on how to contact, select and handle the most trustworthy guides (Ball 1899, 44-48).

Rev. Girdlestone's book sounded particularly provocative because it was expressively dedicated 'to the Undergraduates of the University of Oxford' (Girdlestone 1870, vi-vii), with little or no experience of climbing at all; hence the inclusion of a cautious chapter, carefully edited by 'Professor' John Tyndall, with a series of 'Suggestions to Alpine Tourists', divided into (a) preliminary matters, such as the journey to the Alps; (b) expenses; (c) equipment; (d) precautions for an expedition, especially when unaccompanied by guides; (e) finding the way' (*ibid.*, 158-159). Section (d), written for 'mountaineers', rather than 'tourists', willing to climb 'without ropes', illustrates in fact what a good guide should do; the party, for climbing alone was discouraged, should elect a leader, and the leader act as a careful mountain guide (*ibid.*, 175-178). Girdlestone's goal was not to challenge the Alpine Club 'orthodoxy', but to give young Oxbridge travellers with too little money to afford a guide the

opportunity to spend a holiday in the Alps, and be introduced to the passion of mountaineering.

Despite the intentions, Douglas Freshfield accused Girdlestone to act as a 'heretical but excellent climber, driven into revolt, perhaps, by some of the excesses of Grindelwald or Chamonix orthodoxy, once endeavoured to incite Englishmen to begin climbing by themselves' (Freshfield 1875, 300). His 'heresy' consisted in having challenged a fundamental 'verdict of the Alpine Club', summarized as follows: 'Do not dispense with a guide except when and where you are capable of taking his place', a privilege that Freshfield is ready to attribute only to the experienced 'homo unius montis' (*ibid.*). If it is true, Freshfield continues, that some mountaineers rely on guides for all sorts of support ('moral or physical, under every circumstance'), this does not justify rushing into the opposite, and for the sake of demonstrating bravery do without guides altogether – 'Employing guides need not involve self-effacement. A guide may be looked to as a teacher instead of as a mere steam-tug; he may be followed intelligently instead of mechanically' (*ibid.*).

The repeated stress on the use of guides aimed at preventing the critique of endangering Victorian youths; but climbing without guides fitted with the popular aura of risk-taking encouraged by the popularization of the sublime (Freedgood 2000; Thompson 2010, 57–78). Risk, however, needed to be managed, to avoid the stigma of recklessness. The Burkean idea of risking one's life on a mountain was transformed into an intoxicating method for seeking self-betterment and 'delight', providing of course that death was avoided. Beyond the Alpine Club, 'self-improvement', more generally, 'was to the later Victorians, especially to the mountain-going middle-classes, a powerfully attractive idea' (Macfarlane 2003, 87; Freedgood 2000; Thompson 2010, 29–48). If the tragedy of the Matterhorn in 1865 put an end to the so-called Golden Age of mountaineering, it had in fact an opposite effect to its diffusion as a sportive

practice (Dangar and Blakeney 1965; Simon Thompson 2010, 51–53). The elitist dimension of that age was gone; a new era of mass-tourism started. Climbers of the new generation could plainly assert that ‘the dangers of mountaineering no longer exist. Skill, knowledge, and textbooks have hurled them to the limbo of exploded bogies’ (Mummery 1895, 324). Mountaineering was turning into a sport (Thompson 2010, 52–53).

The success of Thomas Cook’s tours to the continent – sponsored by guidebooks such as Girdlestone’s – satisfied the demand of the middle-class for travelling to Europe and the Alps (Thompson 2010, 51–52; Withey 1997; Buzard 1993b). Stephen would quip that the ‘real’ Switzerland only existed in the ‘valleys which have not yet bowed the knee to Baal, in the shape of Mr. Cook and his tourists’ (Mullen and Munson 2009, 29–30; Stephen 1871, 48). Britain’s domestic stability and prosperity allowed the middle classes to become increasingly eager to seek out risk. Such riskiness was no better dreamed of, dramatized or embodied than in the Swiss and Western Alps, a location available to anyone with the decidedly middle-class means of ‘a few weeks’ holiday’ (Hansen 1995, 305; 323); Switzerland in particular, which offered an Alpine theatre centred on the village of Chamonix laying in the shadow of the ‘king of European mountains’, the Mont Blanc.²⁵

If mountaineering was in part constructed ideologically by that group of morally conscious ‘middle-class Englishmen who believed that the Almighty had deliberately put them into positions of responsibility’ (Clark 1953, 90), in order to dominate landscape, it was also constructed by the increased necessity of incorporating and actively demonstrating character building and athleticism within that ideology as its participatory, bodily accelerant. These mutually supportive outcomes and drives, openly or covertly sponsored by the Alpine Club, fitted well with an agenda of national pride derived from the Victorian ethic of progress (Colley 1992a; Feldman 2002). On the other hand, middle-

class men, during the Golden Age, were increasingly anxious ‘that Britain was transforming itself into a wealthy but unmanly society’ (Hansen 1995, 304); certainly cultural anxieties were as important as patriotic aspirations in the development of mountaineering in the mid-nineteenth century.

At the beginning of the century, nightmares of a Napoleonic invasion were commonplace, and as Linda Colley explains, ‘what had happened in other parts of Europe made anxiety or feverish anticipation almost inescapable’ (Colley 1992a, 306). By the time of the Golden Age, however, a series of militaristic failings, including those of the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, had undermined what was by then perceived as ‘a complacent confidence in British manliness and power’ (Hansen 1995, 313). Perhaps there is little amazement, therefore, at Whympers deference to rousing and militaristic metaphors in this passage of *Scrambles*:

Caution and perseverance gain the day—the height is reached! and those beneath cry “Incredible; ’tis superhuman!” ... We who go mountain-scrambling have constantly before us the superiority of fixed purpose or perseverance to brute force. We know that each height, each step, must be gained by patient, laborious toil ... we know the benefits of mutual aid, that many a difficulty must be encountered, and many an obstacle must be grappled with or turned, but we know that where there’s a will there’s a way: and we come back to our daily occupations better fitted to fight the battle of life, and to overcome the impediments which obstruct our paths, strengthened and cheered by the recollection of past labours, and by memories of victories gained in other fields (Whympers 1893, 394).

Whympers prose exemplifies here the Golden Age imperative that acted or could be seen to counterpoise concern over Britain’s relative decline and status in relation to the growing reputation and prowess of other European powers, such as Italy, France and Germany (Hansen 1995, 323).

Melanie Tebbutt argues that anxieties on a domestic and gendered level also contributed to a manly construction of mountain landscapes and mountaineering. British upland areas, for instance provided a space where men from industrial cores could find an emotional sanctuary to escape from the domestic sphere that had become increasingly a woman's place of duty, expectation and responsibility. At the same time, the economic and political advances of women were gradually more discernable in both public and private spheres. In industrial urban centres, such as Manchester, a non-conformist, socialist, and working-class ethic contributed to the development of recreational exercises, particularly rambling and hill-walking in the British heathlands and moors, as a masculine-like character-building pursuit (Tebbutt 2006).²⁶ It is clear, so far, that the discourses on mountaineering and appreciation of the Alps, from the Golden Age decade up to latter part of the nineteenth century, reflected, as Wendy Joy Darby confirms, 'a gendered symbolism of landscape' (Darby 2000, 2).²⁷

Cultural anxiety caused by the fear of impending usurpation by a foreign European power, by Britain's militaristic embarrassments, or by the changing role of women, was not enough to warrant, however, the general interpretation of the age that labels it as jingoistic. The reports of personal exploits by individual members of the Alpine Club tended to emphasize 'their personal trials and tribulations and their ability to triumph over these, as an indicator of moral worth or the triumph of certain collective values' (Bevin 2010, 145; take the above quote from Whympers' *Scrambles* for illustration). Ideas of patriotism and British hegemony were important in mountaineering accounts, but as key figures like Stephen and Whymper reveal in their writings, it was the personal relationship they forged with the mountain itself and among themselves – whether intimate, romantic, corporeal, imagined, sublime, picturesque,

scientific, artistic, or otherwise – that was their chief motivation towards mountain engagement.

* * *

The three matrices of topographic memory – that of the Grand Tour, the geological discovery of the Alps, and of the Golden Age of Mountaineering – discussed in these chapters are significant tropes that added to mountain landscapes a certain symbolic magnetism and cultural capital. Leaning on the philosophical framework provided by Collins (2004), these matrices allowed individuals to emotionally interact with these landscapes geographically, either imaginatively or for real. The Golden Age provides geographers with a unique scenario whereby representations of reality, or of myth say of dragons or the unreachable summits of Mont Blanc or the Matterhorn, acquired in the geographical imagination of Victorians powerful iconic symbols to act upon and 'live'. This action, 'doing', allowed mountain symbolism to become even more meaningful, even if myths were quashed or replaced by new ones. Similarly to what Veronica Della Dora shows in her work on Mount Athos, mountaineering in the Alps during the Golden Age, 'more or less consciously, re-embodied myth through ... direct phenomenological engagement with territory through ... embodied gaze and field practices' (Della Dora 2010, 126).

To Della Dora's examples that lead to a 'layering' of meaning attached to specific landscapes, we could also add the mountaineers of the Golden Age and Alpine Club in their impact on forming layers within the cultural landscape of the Alps, including the myths around nation and character-building. Their embodied gazing in these endeavours was supposedly best operated and represented in the Alps. Conceptually, the symbolic magnetism attached to the Alps during this period acquired such a power that when re-circulated in a slightly later time, in a slightly different place, a new symbolic energy – and iconography was created.

Applied to the Dolomites, Collins' interaction model not only consumed the symbols already inscribed into the Alps, but also transformed and modified them into new symbols. This new symbolic vocabulary echoed the original one but spoke to different motives and styles of engagement with landscape. The extent to which these re-circulated symbols can be classified as 'English' when operated in the Dolomites, and the degree to which these penetrated into the palimpsest landscape of the Dolomites themselves, is discussed in the next chapters. Phenomenological approaches to the Alpine landscape, first hinted at by Shelley's *Mont Blanc*, will be exploited in the Dolomite region resulting in a fully articulated experience of the Dolomites: a type of thinking through the body – 'the living, sentient, purposive body' (Shusterman 2012, 3) – whose action becomes part of the scenery itself.

Notes

¹ For the full poem and some general analysis see Greenblatt (2006, 770–773). Mont Blanc was composed in the summer of 1816 when Percy Bysshe Shelly and Mary Godwin, later his wife, travelled to the Alps. Byron was similarly moved by the Alpine scenery after seeing Mont Blanc, also in 1816, which resulted in some of his most famous works including *Child Harold's Pilgrimage*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, and *Manfred* (Fleming 2004, 53). Mont Blanc was first published in 1817, at the end of Shelley's *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*. There are two versions of the poem after the discovery of a second one in a trunk in the vault of the Pall Mall branch Barclay's Bank (M. Anderson 2013). For our purposes, the first version is used.

² The story of this rivalry became a milestone also in the history of Italian mountaineering, as reported in Attilio Motti's account (Motti 1997, 1: 98–111); the acknowledgement of the prestige of the Italian Alpine Club (CAI) was largely attached to it. Since then, British mountaineers started sending their books to the CAI's library, accompanying them with personal dedication; this is the case of Whymper's *Ascent of the Matterhorn* (1880): 'Au Club Alpin Italien, Section Turin, hommage de l'auteur' (Garimoldi 1992, 23).

³ For an equally gripping account of Whymper's ascent see his *The Ascent of the Matterhorn* (1880), although it resembles an abridged version of the account in *Scrambles*.

⁴ Jacques Balmat, peasant crystallier (someone who sought out minerals and rock specimens to be sold to collectors) and mountain guide of Mont Blanc fame, was derogatorily criticized by some contemporaries, including his co-claimant to the first ascent of Mont Blanc, Michel-Gabriel Paccard, as a fortune-gold hunter. He would die of a fall from the cliffs of Mont Ruan in 1834 on a mission in search for gold (Hansen 2013, 165). Indeed a great deal of unpleasantness emerged out of competing claims for the honour of the first ascent of Mont Blanc; controversy surrounding the first ascent is examined in the scholarly works of De Beer and Brown (1957) and Hansen (2013).

⁵ Whymper's Andean climbs are accounted in his *Travels Amongst the Great Andes of the Equator* (1891), several of which were first ascents; this book is less known and lacks the drama of *Scrambles*, but it is no less important, containing important scientific information; Whymper follows on from the legacy established by Humboldt, for example, in the region (see Chapter 2; see Neate 1980, 19).

⁶ See also Whymper's own reflective words when on the descent a fog-like cloud emerged, in the shape of three crosses. Some have regarded it as a foreboding apparition linked to the accident: 'The Spectral forms remained motionless. It was a fearful sight; unique in my experience, and impressive beyond description, coming at such a moment' (Whymper 1893, 388). Such a rare, if not dubious atmospheric event is discussed by Conefrey and Jordan (2002, 46). Whymper's inclusion of this, as well as a now-famously reproduced woodcut of the vision, added again 'something strange and supernatural about the events on the Matterhorn that would keep the public fascinated for years to come' (*ibid.*). This imagery links to the early Romantic painting of Caspar David Friedrich, who would reverse Ruskin's edict, that the mountains are cathedrals of the earth, by painting cathedrals in the form of mountains, or at least in their transition in becoming them. Whymper, for whom clouds become crosses, as Friedrich, seems to merge the natural topography into the scared object itself, forgoing landscape (still, the atmosphere) worthy of worship (Ireton and Schaumann 2012, 91).

⁷ Conway prefers Whymper's *Scrambles* woodcuts to Ruskin's drawings in *Modern Painters*, quoting Stephen, they 'seem to bring the genuine Alps before us in all their marvellous beauty and variety of architecture' (Conway 1904, 36).

⁸ *Illustrated London News* (London, England), Saturday, December 25, 1852, 565. There is also a published programme of the spectacle (1851). Smith's Mont Blanc show decorated the stage with his framed certificate – given to all successful climbers attesting the validity of their achievement. Guides brought from Chamonix and girls dressed in National Swiss costume all added to the 'authenticity' of the performance (Slatter 1986).

⁹ Abraham usefully helps us recall that though some Victorian mountaineers would have undoubtedly looked with disfavour on Smith's Egyptian Hall spectacle, as is shown in this chapter, 'it must be remembered that in those early days the Alps were

practically unknown to Englishmen, and many of the famous climbers who afterwards conquered the great peaks imbibed their first enthusiasm through listening to Albert Smith's thrilling story of Mont Blanc' (1907, 17–18).

¹⁰ David Matless corroborates this view in *Landscape and Englishness* (1998), in which he argues that the idealization of an ideological British countryside did not emerge in situ, but was constructed imaginatively, traversing class, politics and topography to such extent, perhaps, that the 'ideal' place of the British countryside only really resides in conceptualizations (see also Bell and Holliday 2001, 128–129).

¹¹ For a similar relationship between the conceptual link between literature and culture to the one I propose here, see Budick (1996, 131); she employs the critical thinking of Sacvan Bercovitch in her understanding of the formation of ideology. See also the Introduction and Chapter 1 for my usage of the term matrices of topographic memory, particularly with regard to Collins' circulation of symbols (2004).

¹² There are at least seven editions of *The Playground of Europe* and Stephen varied the contents between them considerably. The first and 1894 (reprinted in 1909) editions are used here'. The 1894 edition, for instance, includes the new chapter 'Sunset on Mont Blanc'. The first edition is not always considered as good as some of the others, but for consistency is employed for referencing here. The collected essays of *The Playground* were originally written in the 1860s for the periodical press.

¹³ Whymper admitted himself that *Scrambles* contained a number of writing flourishes and shortcomings (Fleming 2001, 293).

¹⁴ Conway, to refer again to his chapter 'How to See Mountains', offers a similar, but somewhat less physically embodied version Stephen's approach to mountain beauty. In 'The Moods of the Mountain' he also clearly argues aesthetic affect on the mountaineer is enhanced by physical embodiment: 'No one can really know the high Alps who has not been out in a storm at some great elevation. The experience may not be, in fact is not, physically pleasant, but it is morally stimulating in a high degree, and aesthetically grand' (Conway 1904, 117).

¹⁵ In the 1894 enlarged edition of *The Playground* the 'Sunset on Mont Blanc' chapter Stephen argues that the relationship between the mountaineer and the mountain itself are symbiotically connected, and is useful for summarizing Stephen's emotional

approach to mountain appreciation not necessarily seen in the first edition: 'But at least the connection is close and intimate. He is a part of the great machinery in which my physical frame is inextricably involved, and not the less interesting because a part which I am unable to subdue to my purposes. The whole universe, from the stars and the planets to the mountains and the insects which creep about their roots, is but a network of forces eternally acting and reacting upon each other. The mind of man is a musical instrument upon which all external objects are beating out infinitely complex harmonies and discords' (Stephen 1909, 296).

¹⁶ Art historians call this a 'back view' painting.

¹⁷ The Romantic poets, instead, preferred 'subjective truth and the faculty of the imagination', de-materializing the 'materiality of the natural world' (Morrison 2009, 499). One clear exception would be Wordsworth's understanding of the physicality and genius loci of place in his *Guide to the Lakes* of 1810-35. His guide to the English Lake District was central to the development of travel book literature, regional geography and marked a break with Grand Tour guides in the transition towards more touristic practice (Buzard 1993b; Nabholz 1964; Ottum 2012; Squire 1990; Whyte 2000; Wordsworth 1970).

¹⁸ Jon Mathieu moots a similar drive towards a peaceful balance between the sacred (or imaginative) and the material complexities of mountain appreciation; according to him, like Leslie Stephen, attempts to 'think like a mountain' had the want-to-be mountaineer merging these oppositional dynamics (Mathieu 2006; 2011). Stephen, in a passage in 'Sunset on Mont Blanc', would allude to this such a temperament again: 'The mountains represent the indomitable force of nature to which we are forced to adapt ourselves; they speak to man of his littleness and his ephemeral existence' (Stephen 1909, 297).

¹⁹ This version of landscape perception is not too unrelated from Merleau-Ponty's idea that knowledge production in artistic representations can also involve a symbiotic 'seeing with the painting, instead of looking at it' as Minna Törmä has discussed (DeLue and Elkins 2008, 105). Firm links to geographic notions of landscape and this usage of 'seeing with' are discussed in later chapters.

²⁰ Hansen (2013, 186) describes how the Alpine peaks 'were never exclusively a British playground and climbers of many nationalities reasserted their sovereignty over the

Alps in the face of external invasion' by the British. It is also true that 'mountaineering in the Alps became a European sport, instead of a merely British one' (Hansen 1991, 204); the Deutsche Alpenverein 'flourished in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rapidly becoming the largest alpine organization in the world' (Holt 2008, 2).

²¹ Still valuable (sometimes even irreplaceable for the details they provide), are more traditional studies that tend to approach the history of mountaineering from a chronological point of view, often following the succession of first ascents: (Bernstein 1989; Irving 1955; Clark 1956, visual companion of Clark 1953). See also, Motti 1997 and, most recently, Gasparetto 2012.

²² Alfred Wills' introduction to Clinton Thomas Dent's *Mountaineering* (1892), provides a contemporary analysis of the growth of interest in the mountaineering phenomenon during the Golden Age; it confirms the position of current scholarship when he writes 'few sports, perhaps few pursuits, afford keener or more lasting enjoyment, or contribute more to the acquisition of self-reliance, patience, and self-restraint' (Dent 1892, xviii).

²³ Ruskin was the supreme Alpine enthusiast, but he never reached over 10,000 feet; he was elected to the Alpine Club in 1869 on the strength of his Alpine writings. Original proposals, which were eventually rejected, had members failingligibility 'unless he shall have ascended to the top of a mountain 13,000 feet in height' (Irving 1955, 87).

²⁴ See also Oldstone-Moore (2006).

²⁵ Hansen (2013, 32) debates the validity of the English 'discovery' and 'making up discovery' of Chamonix by grand tourist William Windham, along with Richard Pococke, who voyaged to the Alps to satisfy his curiosity of the Savoy glaciers in 1741: Nevertheless, a curiously British dimension had secured itself to this landscape by 1800 partly because by then 'it was widely believed that Windham discovered Chamonix and Mont Blanc' (*ibid.*, 33). As if this were not enough, by the mid 1800s, as Ann Colley corroborates, 'an increasing number of middle-class and upper-class tourists as well as climbers were invading the region and transforming it into an English-speaking preserve' (Colley 2010, 2).

²⁶ Outdoor pursuits, at least in Britain itself and not in the Alps, were not simply the preserve of the middle class male as mountaineering might have been. Upland areas,

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heathlands, and moorlands provided the Victorian working class man with 'unspoilt' landscapes, away from the 'contamination of modernity' in the 'unknowable' city where the rational manifestations of masculinity were being challenged. The iconic status of natural, wild landscapes subsequently expanded across the social classes as perceptions grew of them as not only the 'antidote for the stresses of urban life but a source of national spiritual renewal' (Tebbutt 2006, 1136): an 'antidote to the pollution and grime of the Industrial Revolution' (Bevin 2010, 144).

²⁷ Gendered discourses are self-evident in the mountaineering literatures, but they also exist in those debates around domestic recreational pursuits like rambling, touched on here as a manly activity, as well as other healthy open-air movements such as the Boy Scouts and the Young Men's Christian Association (Matless 1998).

PART TWO

THE INVENTION OF THE DOLOMITES





CHAPTER 4

The Silver Age of Mountaineering

As the night approached and the shadows became deeper, the weird individuality and almost human expression of some of these misty giants, abrupt, and unlooked for, became almost oppressive. I came to think that they were mountains run mad.

— Frances Elliot

In the recent histories on Victorian mountaineering, the Dolomite Mountains figure only scantily. They are absent in the most recent work by Peter Hansen (2013) as well as in the acclaimed bestseller by Robert Macfarlane (2008); hardly referred to in the more specific account on Victorian mountaineers and travellers by Ann C. Colley, but with no reference to their spectacular scenery (2010); quickly mentioned in the cultural-historical synthesis by Andrew Beattie, but never in relation to their debatable peaks (2006); partly quoted in the hagiographical excursus on Victorian mountaineers by Trevor Braham, but only when relevant to their biographies (2004); and they are similarly omitted in the readable popular books by Fergus Fleming (2001) and Reuben Ellis (2001). Despite their recent inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List, the list of omissions could continue, proving, once more, that the Dolomites still constitute a blind spot of academic inquiry.

To find some attention paid to the Dolomite Mountains in the context of British Alpinism, we have to consult the old monograph on Victorian mountaineers by Ronald William Clark (1953) and its illustrated companion (1956); while the almost contemporary work by Robert Irving (1955) omits them almost completely. The presence of British Alpinists in the Dolomites is, instead, amply recorded in Italian histories, and most notably in the recent monograph by Mirco Gasparetto (2012). Gasparetto's detailed reconstruction of that presence is certainly to date the most comprehensive account on the exploits of British mountaineers in the region, but by far not an isolated case (Zandonella Callegher 2003; Franco 2002; Colli 1999; Avanzini and Wachtler 1999; Motti 1997; Decarli 2006a; Garimoldi 1995; Angelini 2006, 1987, 1977, and 1953; Berti 1928).¹ These studies aptly highlight the pioneering dimension of the phenomenon, the involvement of local guides, and the attention paid to first ascents or to the opening-up of new climbing routes.

The heroes praised in these publications are usually well-known mountaineers, who proved their talent in the Western or Swiss Alps, before climbing the Eastern ones – from the more distinguished members of the Alpine Club (John Ball, Douglas Freshfield, Leslie Stephen, William Coolidge, Arthur Cust, Edward Whymper, William Edward Utterson-Kelso, William Edward Davidson, Thomas Bonney, Francis Fox Tuckett, John Norman Collie) to the so-called 'heretical' adherents of 'modern mountaineering', mainly interested in rock-climbing, sometimes without guides, such as Ludwig Norman Neruda, Albert Frederick Mummery, the Abraham brothers, and most importantly, perhaps, John Swinnerton Phillimore (Phillimore 1899), who together with others opened in the Dolomites the series of the so-called 'vie inglesi' ('English ways') – that is, more difficult routes to ascend a Dolomite peak, after their first conquest by Austrian or German climbers, such as Paul Grohmann and Georg Winkler (Gasparetto 2012; Richardi 2008; Grohmann 1877).

The greatest merit of Italian historiography is to consider, together with these names, also the local guides who assisted them in their ascents. The implicit suggestion, therefore, is to consider Victorian mountaineering as an interactive practice, as an activity to be framed as a partnership – an intimate relationship, although not a sexualized one, mostly between two men (Gasparetto 2012, 28), something that could be explored within the perspective famously outlined by Eve Kosofsky Segdwick (1985). From our perspective, we could say that during the Victorian period, foreign climbers and autochthonous guides constructed a landscape through an engaged reciprocal interaction; and therefore the conquest of a peak ought to be understood as a shared achievement (Benedetti 2002, 464; Motti 1997, 232; Colli 1999).²

It would be misleading, however, to consider this encounter as something exclusive; although some cases, such as the one represented by Douglas Freshfield and his guide François Joseph Dévouassoud, could suggest it. The one between guides and mountaineers was in fact a ‘promiscuous’ relationship. It involved people of different social backgrounds, people at work with people on a holiday, people used to live in a city and people living in the mountains, well-educated and almost illiterate people, and so on; furthermore, the guides were shared by different mountaineers and gained their reputation by collecting, in their journals, the comments and signatures of a variety of illustrious clients (Fig. 1). The sharing of emotional energies involved in these interactions derived from different stocks; and their recirculation occurred in situations that were hardly comparable – one thing was to share anecdotes about these adventures in a Swiss chalet and another was to retell them in a London club. Leslie Stephen, in the preface to *The Playground of Europe*, felt possessed ‘with a nervous feeling’ in telling to the London public stories that emerged sitting at the door of some Swiss inn, smoking the pipe of peace after a hard day’s walk’ (Stephen 1871, viii).

Despite the great effort to include the Dolomites in the grand history of Alpine mountaineering, their British 'invention' did not occur during the Golden Age or as part of the Golden Age ethos. I argue here that this 'invention' came about in reaction to, or better as a deviation from the bombastic rhetoric of the Golden Age. This encounter with the Dolomites qualifies instead a subsequent generation of travellers, motivated by different prerogatives and necessitating alternative ways of appreciating and dealing with mountain landscapes. Therefore, I shall frame the invention of the Dolomites within the context of what I call 'the Silver Age of Mountaineering' – a period that came after the Golden Age and concludes at the outbreak of World War One (1865-1914).³

Defined and qualified by the Dolomites, the 'Silver Age' of mountaineering exhibited a series of picturesque elements, simultaneously developed in the Peak and Lake Districts as well as in travels to the Italian peninsula, through a multi-layered set of cultural practices. Utterly different from the ones that defined the 'Golden Age', these practices devised an engagement with mountains that was more ethnographic than imperialistic, more feminine than masculine, more aesthetic than sportive – rather than racing to summits, the Silver Age is about rambling, rather than conquering peaks, it is about sketching them (see Chapter 5). This picturesque framing transformed mountain experience into something more intimate, sentimental, feminine and artistic; something different, something English, that I term here the 'Dolomite Picturesque' (see Chapter 6). Even specialist accounts on rock-climbing, such as the one exemplified by the book of Joseph Sanger Davies (see Chapter 7), could not escape the fairy-like charm of the Silver Age.

This age set into motion a recirculation of geographical symbols that introduced in learned and popular debates about mountain scenery a new set of cultural images as well as recycling old ones. This chapter begins by investigating the intensity of these symbols, as entrenched in the dynamics of

aesthetic motivation and cultural circulation, away from the common narratives on the origins and later developments of mountaineering as a sport, with their stress on sensationalistic masculinity and patriotism (Bayers 2003; but see here Chapter 3). A closer scrutiny on the so-called 'invention' of the Dolomites shall provide further evidence for understanding the ways in which English culture was etched into the Dolomitic landscape, both geographically and historically. This, in turn, motivates an initial recirculation, in the Dolomite region, of symbols originating from the three matrices of topographic memory outlined in the first part of this work (Chapters 1-3).

Of course mountaineers played a role, in this complex recirculation, but theirs was perhaps not the most enduring contribution. It was rather a series of English travellers, rather than mountaineers, who exerted the greatest impact in constructing the Dolomites imaginatively, away from the reports of ascents published in the *Alpine Journal*. For these travellers, the Dolomites provided a form of escape away from both the bombastic adventurousness of the Golden Age as well as from the itineraries popularised by Mr Cook's travels – a destination off the beaten track but close enough to Venice and the Mediterranean, more in general, to allow for the exploitation of touristic practices acquired through the beloved voyage to Italy. Intimately attached to the memory of the Grand Tour, this voyage established a community of British authors, the so-called Anglo-Italians, lured to the 'Dolomite Mountains' for their unfrequentedness and unequalled, bizarre beauty.

I will limit myself to discuss three seminal contributions in establishing this promotion – the one of the Anglo-Irish naturalist, and first president of the Alpine Club, John Ball (1868), whose holiday residency in Bassano del Grappa became a welcoming milestone for scientist and travellers alike (Hooker 1890, 103); the one of Englishmen Josiah Gilbert and George Cheetham Churchill (1864), who baptized the entire district as the 'Dolomite Mountains'; and the

one of Amelia B. Edwards, who with her ‘midsummer rambles in the Dolomites’ established the myth of the ‘untroddenness’ and ‘unfrequentedness’ of the once-called Venetian Alps. With their works, imbued with naturalistic, classical, literary and artistic reminiscences, these travelling writers attracted the interest of the first English-speaking visitors and established the Dolomites as a firm feature on the touristic map. When also the Dolomites, as it happened to the Swiss Alps, became the target of an institutional investment transforming them into a tourist destination for the European elite, there was no point, for the Anglo-Italians to elect the Dolomites for their Alpine holiday – Switzerland was offering them what they needed. The very idea of Anglo-Italianness came to an end with the political events surrounding the beginning of World War I. The British invention of the Dolomites became a curious note for history books, or just a memory of prestige cultivated by locals: a memory ready to be transformed into heritage.

The Vogue of Italy

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the epochal break between the French Revolution (1789) and the Congress of Vienna (1814) forced Britons to abruptly interrupt the ennobling custom of the Grand Tour. Deprived of Italy, in a moment in which travelling to the Continent had become an impossible enterprise, they embarked in the discovery of their own country, cultivating ‘the comforting illusion’ of continuing to travel ‘back in time’, by exploring step by step the remotest regions of Great Britain – the Peak District, the Lake District, Snowdonia and the Scottish Highlands (Ottum 2012; Colbert 2012; Hose 2008; Hooper 2002; Korte 2000, 66–81; Colley 1992a, 173; Dilley 1990; Andrews 1989; Moir 1964). New practices fostering new ‘ways of being’ in the landscape (Amato 2004, 104–106) competed with old practices of recycling old ‘ways of seeing’ it (Colley 1992a, 173). The rugged sceneries of these remote regions,

‘packaged as scenic attractions with guidebooks, marked paths and viewpoints’ (Daniels 1993, 47), but also albums with views, offered Britons the picturesque consolation of walking, at home, on the canvasses by Salvator Rosa, Nicholas Poussin and Claude Lorrain (Buzard 1993b, 20–21).

After Waterloo, when Britons successfully liberated Europe from Napoleon, their ‘island prison’ finally opened its doors. As Mary Shelley reported in 1826, ‘it was the paramount wish of every English heart, ever addicted to vagabondizing, to hasten to the Continent, and to imitate our forefathers in their almost forgotten custom, of spending the greater part of their lives and fortunes in their carriages on the postroads of the Continent’ (Shelley 1826, 325; Buzard 1993b, 80). But the desire to emulate that custom – in fact never forgotten – was now shared among a crowd of an increasing number of people (Mullen and Munson 2009; Plotz 2008; Elsner and Rubiés 1999; Ousby 1990). A new generation of ‘tourists’, whose forefathers never took part in the ennobling culture of the Grand Tour, was now drifting to the Continent, encroaching a territory that was never theirs. As for those ‘travellers’, whose ancestors did participate in that ennobling custom, the time had arrived ‘when one stops belonging to a culture and can only *tour* it’ (Buzard 1993b, 26).

Paradoxically, the increased number of people flocking to Italy made Italy more distant – Italy became a place populated by ghosts (Luzzi 2008; Chard 1997b; Bell 1997). Tourists and travellers alike had to live with the bitter acknowledgement that Italy – its history, its geography, its culture – had become an alien world where people did things differently (Lowenthal 2011). For those who went there in the illusion of revivifying the ‘almost forgotten custom’ of the Grand Tour, Italy’s foreignness meant also a painful detachment from a shared European heritage of values and beliefs, expressed in a set of ‘cultural landscapes’, ‘cultural practices’ and ‘cultural objects’ once considered crucial for an identity formation. Doctor Johnson’s statement, made famous in 1776 by his

biographer James Boswell, that ‘a man who has not been to Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see’ (Boswell 1970, 742) became untenable. Today, that statement tells us more about the symbols circulating in the construction of that identity and about the practices of accreditation revolving around those symbols than about the value of Italy per se (Buzard 2002, 40, 1993a, 110).

In Johnson’s time the main practice of accreditation, or, as Bishop Richard Hurd put it more explicitly in 1764, ‘the proper method for building up men’, actually, ‘for tricking out a set of fine gentlemen’ (Hurd 1764, 71), coincided with the awareness of belonging to a European heritage and to the cosmopolitan tradition of the Grand Tour. That ‘noble and ancient custom of travelling’, qualified as ‘a journey through the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and France’, defined ‘a custom so visibly tending to enrich the mind with knowledge, to rectify the judgment, to remove the prejudices of education, to compose the outward manners, and in a word form the complete gentleman’ (Nugent 1756, 1: ix), a behaviour, at that time and for that class of travellers, shared transnationally. The travel to Italy assumed in that context a privileged position: ‘The grand object of travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean’, Doctor Johnson maintained, ‘all our religion, almost all our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above the savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean’ (Boswell 1970, 742).

After 1815, that legacy appeared destitute of its foundations: ‘Italy came into vogue’ (Shelley 1826, 326), but stopped being a ‘must’. The question of ‘seeing’ what a ‘man’ was expected to see collided more with the question of becoming ‘British’ than with the question of becoming a ‘man’. Doctor Johnson’s imperative could still be valid if qualified within the formula ‘to see what a British man should see’, or, more extensively, ‘to see what British men and British women were expected to see in order to become British’. Becoming

British, however, did not imply seeing only British things or visiting British places; it implied seeing things, even foreign things, in a British way. The 'beaten path' of Italy became a stage to negotiate this 'way of seeing' in an interaction among British people, sharing at different levels the legacy of the Grand Tour. For the 'un-Italianized' tourist, the British way of seeing was mediated by guidebooks and travelogues; for the 'Anglo-Italian' traveller, seeing Italy became a subject of conversation among British people: 'Your Anglo-Italian ceases to visit the churches and palaces, guide-book in hand; anxious, not to see, but to say that he has seen' (Shelley 1826, 326).

In praising Rome as a fashionable destination ('It is the *fashion* to go to Rome'), an anonymous writer in the *Westminster Review* called that fashion a 'spell' – a spell that would command 'bewildered' Britons to 'hurrying away from their country as fast as they could drive' (Bowring 1825, 359) to engage abroad in a series of frantic activities:

All classes, ages, sexes, and conditions are assembled together; the first of our nobility with the last of our citizens – the most learned members of our universities, with the most dashing loungers of our streets – the prettiest of our belles, and the bluest of our spinsters, are crossing and jostling each other in every corner; talking, writing, wondering, displaying, and rhapsodizing: – lion-hunting, husband-hunting, time-killing, money-spending, view-taking, and bookmaking ... English, in short, of every kind and description – high and low – wise and foolish – rich and poor – black, brown, and fair, haunt every hallowed spot where Tully spoke and Horace sung (*ibid.*).

This 'curious medley' of 'multifarious persons', as the author calls it, did not mingle with the Italians. Even the most acquainted with Rome, the so-called Anglo-Italians, dreamed about a city without its inhabitants: 'She becomes the sepulchre of antiquity, and, as a sepulchre, ought to be lonely. Thus, in truth, we have sometimes wished her to become wholly depopulate; we have desired that

the profound solitude which reigns without her precincts, should also exist within' (Shelley 1829, 130), expressing an attitude that would become common place (Luzzi 2002).⁴

However, the expectation to see Italy in a British way was embraced with cloyed enthusiasm and felt, consciously or unconsciously, as a burden, as a source of anxiety, as a form of imprisonment within the mental borders of the Nation. James Buzard captured this anxiety as an inflection of the Romantic 'dilemma of belatedness' (Buzard 1993b, 106–110, 158–161; Behdad 1994, 63–72; Youngs 2006, 6–7; Giffra-Adroher 2000, 31–32; Schriber 1997, 50; Porter 1991, 3–21). Confronted with a country that people of previous generations had repeatedly visited and countless narrated, British travellers expressed the impossibility of participating fully in the legacy of the Grand Tour by levelling a critique against their fellow citizens following the routes popularized by Mr Cook and Mr Murray.

The legacy of the Grand Tour emerged as a ghostly heritage to be revived by some and be exploited by others, marking a clear distinction between two different travel styles – the one interpreted by the 'traveller' and the one performed by the 'tourist' (Buzard 1993b, 18–79). Anglo-Italian travellers negotiated their British gaze by inhabiting a liminal space between home and abroad, entrapped in a positional 'betweenness' as the deictic locus for casting their Self in subjective views (Schoina 2009, 6–16; Saglia 2000, 144). Un-Italianized tourists, instead, constructed their British gaze by relentlessly representing home while abroad (Buzard 1993b, 8), caught in an inescapable 'stayathomeativeness' as the hegemonic template for confirming their self in objective views:

The Anglo-Italians may be pronounced a well-informed, clever, and active race; they pity greatly those of their un-Italianized countrymen, who are endowed with Spurzheim's bump, denominated stayathome-

ativeness; and in compassion of their narrow experience have erected a literature calculated to disseminate among them a portion of that taste and knowledge acquired in the Peninsula (Shelley 1826, 327).

The travel to Italy became a 'haunted journey' in which ghostly desires opened the way to transgression and internal divides (Luzzi 2008; Porter 1991).

Which party, we may ask, managed to exorcise that ghost? Who won the battle over the ownership of Italy, the Anglo-Italian travellers or the un-Italianized tourists? Whose gaze could legitimately defend the claim of being the heir of the prestigious heritage once attached to the Grand Tour, the idiosyncratic traveller, following the model of Lord Byron, or the conventional tourist, following the guidance of the tourist industry? When Mary Shelley affirmed that after 1815 'Italy came into vogue' (Shelley 1826, 326), she clearly meant Byron's Italy ('Lord Byron may be considered the father of the Anglo-Italian literature', *ibid.* 327-328); but the 'vogue' she was talking about was destined to disappear with the 'vogue' of Byron. The appropriation of Byron on the part of the tourist industry, as James Buzard has lucidly shown (Buzard 1991), contributed to that disappearance. Once promoted as a 'vogue' or 'fashion', the potential heritage of the Italian Tour was destined to remain unachieved.

In this rather hazy context, the old 'beaten path' leading to Venice, Florence, Rome and Naples still continued to attract many British travellers (Pemble 1987), without fearing the potential competition of other continental destinations:

Neither France, Germany, nor Switzerland, content the swallow English. La belle France is now acknowledged to be the most unpicturesque, dull, miserable-looking country in the world. The name of Germany is sufficient in itself to inspire a kind of metaphysical gloom, enlightened only by meteoric flashes from the Hartz or the Elbe. Passing the Jura,

surrounded by the mighty Alps, we ramble delightedly over Switzerland, till the snow and ice, ushered in by the chilling Biz, cause us to escape from the approach of a winter more severe than our own. We fly to Italy; we eat the lotus; we cannot ear ourselves away (Shelley 1826, 327).

Among the Italian marvels, Venice continued to hold a privileged position. It was the city whose inclusion in the itineraries of the Grand Tour Britons had promoted (Redford 1996; Eglin 2001; Brown 2006; Pemble 2009) and whose political and cultural myths they had sought to emulate (Cosgrove 1982 and 1993; 1997; Pfister and Schaff 1999; Rosand 2005; Hanley and Sdegno 2010; Maguire and Nelson 2010; O'Neill, Sandy, and Wootton 2012). For 'tourists', Venice rapidly became the city popularized by Thomas Cook and John Murray; for 'travellers', it remained the city celebrated by Lord Byron and John Ruskin (Buzard 1991; Hanley and Sdegno 2010; Clegg 1981).

The opposition between the two parties coalesced into two travel styles – the reflective slow-pace travel and the superficial fast-pace modes of travelling. It would be reductive to associate the former to the traveller and the latter to the tourist; 'superficial travelling' could characterize both, as the first Archbishop of Westminster, Nicholas Patrick Wiseman, wittingly noticed in the pages of the *Dubliner Review*:

Travellers who skim over the surface of the land, who see it out of carriage windows, and visit its sights by the guide-book, who penetrate no further than the very shell and outside of things, get no deeper than the paint upon the buildings, or the coat upon their inhabitants ... such roadsters, with abundance of untouched food around them, will persevere in tossing over and over the provender which hundreds have been busy at before them, or will try to crop and nibble exactly where all has been clean shaved to the root (Wiseman 1843, 257; see also Schivelbusch 1987).

The rather aggressive strategy with which the burgeoning tourist industry was conquering the market of travel fostered in Britain a strong anti-tourist sentiment, such as the one here expressed by Wiseman, spurring a reorientation of the customs of the Grand Tour towards other destinations and practices (Buzard 1993b, 33–35; Giddey 1991; Morrison 2009). It is in this period that Switzerland and its Alpine attractions became a destination in its own right (Giddey 1991; Tissot 1995; De Beer 1949 and 1932). Embodying the very spirit of travel, the Swiss Alps became, in those years, ‘The Playground of Europe’ (Stephen 1871), as we have seen in Chapter 3.

During this period – we shall remember in concluding this section – Italy, and Venice in particular, became, a ‘symbolic landscape’ (Cosgrove 1984) – a cluster of civilizational ‘zones of prestige’ (Collins 2001; Katzenstein 2011, 152–153, and 2009, 18–19), charged with a residual but still powerful magnetism, mostly connected to the symbolic image that the city had inherited from the Grand Tour. Weakened in its military influence (‘power’) and lagging in its economic affluence (‘profit’), Venice managed to maintain intact its symbolic attraction (‘prestige’) for many members of the new military or economic elites; Lord Byron (1788–1824) and John Ruskin (1819–1900), for instance, drew upon its myth to level a harsh critique towards the Romantic and Victorian societies (Buzard 1991; Cosgrove 1984, 70 and 1979; Clegg 1981).

The Alpine Tour

For tourists and travellers alike, the Alpine Tour happened quite often as a supplement to the Italian Tour – it became a habit, when summer arrived, to escape the heat of Naples or Rome and spend a relaxing holiday in Switzerland, on the way back to Britain (Edwards 1873, 3–4; see also Latrobe 1869, for an exemplary itinerary). Soon, however, also Switzerland became overcrowded (Fig. 4.1); and not just because of the intrusion of railroads in its territory, but

The Silver Age of Mountaineering

because of the sensational feats of the practice of mountaineering introduced by the Alpine Club (Hansen 1995 and 2013; Colley 2010; Beattie 2006; Ellis 2001). The British mountaineer ‘dashes from peak to peak, from group to group, even from one end of the Alps to the other, in the course of a short summer holiday’ (Freshfield 1875, 182–183). Its prototype could be found in the heroic figure of Francis Fox Tuckett (1834-1913), the equivalent of ‘the wandering Ulysses in Greek fable, or the invulnerable Sivrid in the lay of the Niebelungs’ (Stephen 1871, 199; Tuckett 1920); many others, however, could aspire to that category (Hansen 1991).



Fig. 4.1 - Vallée de Chamonix: Traversée de la Mer de Glace, photo 1902-04, Zentralbibliothek Zürich.

Without rehearsing what said in the previous chapter, it is important here to remark that mountaineering introduced a considerably different travel practice from the ones performed by travellers and tourists going to the continent – mountaineering, at least this was how it was perceived, was mainly a sport:

It is a sport which, like fishing or shooting, brings one into contact with the sublimest aspects of nature; and, without setting their enjoyment before one as an ultimate end or aim, helps one indirectly to absorb and be penetrated by their influence. Still it is strictly a sport – as strictly as cricket, or rowing, or knurr and spell – and I have no wish to place it on a different footing. The game is won when a mountain-top is reached in spite of difficulties; it is lost when one is forced to retreat; and whether won or lost, it calls into play a great variety of physical and intellectual energies, and gives the pleasure which always accompanies an energetic use of our faculties (Stephen 1871, 267).

It is a sport, however, without ‘reporters’ – alpinism ought to be conducted in solitude, accompanied only by some good friends, a local guide and possibly a porter (Hansen 1999); but a sport able to instil, through the accounts of its sensational feats (Allec 2009; Coolidge 1893), a strong sense of collective effervescence and spirit of both envy and emulation.

From an anonymous article in the *Frazer's Magazine*, probably written by Leslie Stephen himself, we know that by 1859 ‘Alpine literature’ had already grown out of measure (for a modern inventory, see Neate 1980; furthermore Allec 2009 and Wilson 2006), to the point that the ‘tourist’ could be ‘puzzled as to what he should read, take, and avoid’ (Stephen 1859, 232); by the end of the century, guides on guidebooks were written to provide an orientation in the maze of publications (Coolidge 1889). Switzerland is depicted here as the ‘playground’ for an utterly British performance, as a ‘country to be walked, ridden, or driven over – a country for active rather than passive enjoyment – a kind of gymnasium for mind as well as body’ (*ibid.*, 233); a performance, rather than merely a gaze, that British mountaineers pioneered before all other nations:

How thoroughly English all this is, and how indicative of that rambling, scrambling, exercise-loving disposition which makes foreigners fancy,

with the first grave-digger in *Hamlet*, that insanity is the normal condition of mind in this country ... It may be no doubt national vanity that makes us think so, but still there certainly seem to be reasons for supporting that we do succeed; and that we enjoy Switzerland more thoroughly than our neighbours, either through having a keener relish for nature, or being better adapted, physically and constitutionally, for making the necessary exertion a pleasure (*ibid.*, 232-233).

The winning situation was in fact less determined by the constitutional predisposition of the British than by the fortunate combination of two 'golden ages' – the one of mountaineering and the one of the travel book: 'the first half of the nineteenth century was the golden age of the English illustrated travel book or book of views' (Ball 1971, 53). Two turns subtended this success: the move from a passive towards an active enjoyment of the Alpine scenery, and the move from 'picturesque scenic arrangements, either verbal or painted, towards a greater factual, informative accuracy' in travel books (*ibid.*, 54).

The direct and risky engagement with mountains, however, never displaced the old pleasure for their view. To the contrary, it created another divide between mountaineers and travellers, along the lines of the old dispute between active and contemplative lifestyles. The image of seeing Switzerland as 'a kind of gymnasium for mind as well as body', to see it as the 'playground' for acquiring physical virtues such as strength, intrepidity and resistance, was diametrically opposed to the image of seeing Italy as the 'playground' for acquiring intellectual virtues 'tending to enrich the mind with knowledge, to rectify the judgment, to remove the prejudices of education, to compose the outward manners', to quote Thomas Nugent again (1756; see Chapter 1). British travellers were neither entirely ready to abandon Italy for Switzerland, nor entirely convinced that mountaineering in the Alps could represent 'the proper method for building up men', replacing the old custom of travelling to the one of rambling, walking or climbing.

As sensational as it could be in its achievements, mountaineering was seen as a pleasurable entertainment for 'young lads', suited to be dubbed as 'puerile' and 'irreverent' in comparison with other more ennobling activities. This led their detractors to formulate perhaps the harshest critique against mountaineers – that they were unequipped to appreciate the beauty of mountain scenery:

Our critics admit that we have a pleasure; but assert that it is a puerile pleasure – that it leads to an irreverent view of mountain beauty, and to oversight of that which should really most impress a refined and noble mind ... We are, it seems, overgrown schoolboys, who, like other schoolboys, enjoy being in dirt, and danger, and mischief, and have as much sensibility for natural beauty as the mountain mules (Stephen 1871, 267, 272).

Through their reckless sport, these old schoolboys 'have removed the romance from the mountains by climbing them' (*ibid.*, 281) – a point which aptly summarises Ruskin's influential opinion (Morrison 2009, 499).

However, if the proper sensibility for natural beauty was something that could not be acquired through climbing alone, this could neither be acquired through tourism – 'Innumerable tourists have done all that tourists can do to cocknify (if that is the right derivative from cockney) the scenery' by looking at it comfortably from their hotel' (Stephen 1871, 273, 277). Defined by 'inaccessibility', 'size' and 'steepness', mountain beauty could only be appreciated by the mountaineer, who like a painter who has learned to improve his 'natural sensibility' through 'methodical experience', possesses the 'experimental faith' that allowed him 'to substitute a real living belief for a dead intellectual assent' (*ibid.*, 276). Mountaineering transformed men into living instruments capable of composing a real mountain scenery in their mind thanks to a technique they acquired through their own bodies; young men who,

differently from ‘the ordinary tourists – the old man, the woman, or the cripple, who are supposed to appreciate the real beauties of Alpine scenery’ by looking at it from the windows of their hotels (*ibid.*, 277) – know how to distinguish in that scenery ‘boulders’ from ‘chamois’, ‘a pinnacle of rock’ from a ‘church tower’, or ‘the rocks of the Grand Mulets’ from ‘a party ascending Mont Blanc’ (*ibid.*, 276).

The glory of mountaineering is different from ‘mountain glory’ (Ruskin 1903, 6: 418–466); but, equally to ‘mountain glory’, it received ‘its inexpressible charm’ through the exposure to ‘the incessant series of exquisite natural scenes, which are for the most part enjoyed by the mountaineer alone’ (Stephen 1871, 283). The difference relies not only in the way in which mountain scenery is perceived, but rather in the way it is portrayed. Two different techniques are here tacitly compared – the one that refers to the eloquent art of composing a landscape as a ‘way of seeing’ it, as the product of an act of ‘contemplation’, and the one that refers to the sportive practice of doing a landscape as a ‘way of challenging’ it, as the product of an act of ‘action’. The intrepidity of the latter, however, could never compete with the prestige of the former; the symbolic energy attached to this was much stronger than the one attached to that, as we have already discussed in Chapter 3.⁵

Ruskin was acknowledged to have expounded at great length and with admirable acuteness the beauty of mountains for the pleasure and the progress of human viewers (Stephen 1900, 242); thanks to him, Stephen was ready to admit, ‘mountains are now intensely real and, so to speak, alive to their fingers’ ends’ (Stephen 1871, 29).⁶ But Ruskin had openly attacked those members precisely on the ground of mountain scenery;⁷ and Stephen was forced to admit that ‘The mountains, like music, require not only the absence of disturbing causes, but the presence of a delicate and cultivated taste’ (Stephen 1871, 14). What mountaineers could not accept was Ruskin’s privileged point of view for

appreciating that scenery: 'All the best views of hills are at the bottom of them' (Ruskin 1903, 37: 142). If Leslie Stephen, in 1871, was cautious in reacting against a man that he revered as a 'prophet' (Stephen 1900, 242), Ronald William Clark, in 1951, rejected Ruskin's argument as guided by 'something twisted and something lacking' (Clark 1953, 39) – Ruskin was accused of not being a climber.

Nevertheless, the spell that Ruskin's 'word-paintings' put on mountain scenery was more difficult to challenge than the mountains themselves – and this, according to Stephen, was regrettable.⁸ Similarly to what happened with the mannered travelogues written in the style of Byron (Buzard 1991), the description of mountains could not escape to indulge in certain Ruskinian mannerism (Stephen 1871, 268). The general advice was to avoid any Ruskinian or Byronic eloquence in talking about mountain and to indulge in a rather light witticism. Tall talk about their scenery became suspicious, and consequently most writers who frankly adopt the sportive ethos of mountaineering, adopted the opposite scheme – they affected something like cynicism ('They mix descriptions of scenery with allusions to fleas or to bitter beer; they shrink with the prevailing dread of Englishmen from the danger of overstepping the limits of the sublime into its proverbial opposite; and they humbly try to amuse us because they can't strike us with awe', Stephen 1871, 268–269). Making jokes on a mountain became a strategy to tame its most challenging dangers and to clothe the story of its conquest with a nonchalant tone (*ibid.*, 269). This attitude, however, spread the myth that mountaineers were insensible to mountain scenery, to the point that in revising his articles before their inclusion in *The Playground of Europe*, Stephen felt the urge to purge his original texts from the slang and jokes they contained (Stephen 1871, viii–ix).

The safest way to talk about mountain scenery was adopting of the architectural metaphor – 'it is scarcely possible to describe the wildest

mountain scenery without the use of architectural metaphor' (Stephen 1871, 13); and in anticipating an often quoted remark by Le Corbusier ('The Dolomites are the most beautiful architectures of the world', Gianolla 2008, 80), he ventured to predict that a viewer with 'a taste in human buildings' would certainly prefer 'the more startling effects only to be seen in the heart of the mountains' over 'the delicate grace of lowland scenery' (Stephen 1871, 13). The architectural metaphor soon became mandatory also in the most popular tourist guides. In Martin Conway's *The Alps* (1904), for instance, 'aimed more broadly to interest the mountain-lover of whatever age or sex and whatever agility or endurance' (*ibid.*, 153), architectural features are used to portray the different 'Types of Alpine Peaks' as verbal tools suggesting 'How to See Mountains', orderly divided into 'domes', 'pyramids', 'pinnacles', 'aiguilles', 'spires', 'towers' and 'walls', associated with exemplary Alpine peaks (*ibid.*, 151-176). In particular, pinnacles, spires and pyramids became the standard terminology to talk about the Dolomites, as we have seen in Chapter 2.

Douglas Freshfield, in discovering the still untrodden pinnacles of the Brenta Dolomites, asserted significantly, as early as in 1864, that the encounter with the Dolomite Mountains changed the way in which mountaineering was perceived until then:

As the morning mists cleared off, weird pinnacles peered down upon us, one gigantic tower looming above them all. Everything had the charm of novelty. It was like breaking in on an enchanted land, where all the laws of Alpine scenery had been reversed. Mountains cut down into towers and pinnacles, and glacier torrents no longer allowed to burst forth noisily from their native ice, but filtered underground until fit to sparkle through the secluded glens which form one of the characteristic beauties of Dolomite scenery (Freshfield 1865, 103-104).

To describe the ‘beauties of Dolomite scenery’ he evoked Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (‘Bilberries grew abundantly, and as for the strawberries, they were fit for Titania’s own table’ *Ibid.*); and the epigraph opening his Dolomite chapter recycled Lord Tennyson’s *The Princess* (1847): ‘And then we turned, and wound | About the cliffs – the copses – till the sun | Grew broader towards his death, and fell – and all | The rosy heights came out above the lawns’ (*ibid.* 103, Tennyson 1850, 69).

Gothic Mountains

Confronted with the same mountains of dolomite, as we have seen in Chapter 2, also Murray was attracted by the ‘singularity and picturesqueness of their forms’; and his attraction clearly derived from Leopold von Buch’s scenery composition. In his description of the Fassa Valley, above Moena, Murray talks of ‘remarkable’ and ‘singular’ peaks, a ‘striking contrast to all other mountains’, of their ‘dazzling whiteness’ and ‘gigantic walls’, their ‘picturesque outline’, which takes the ‘appearance of towers and obelisks, divided from one another by cracks some thousand feet deep; at other the points are so numerous and slender, that they put one in mind of a bundle of bayonets or sword-blades’ (Murray 1837, 241).

It is without doubt, however, the remarkable success of *The Dolomite Mountains* (1864), by painter and art-critic Josiah Gilbert and the naturalist George Cheetham Churchill (Fig. 4.2), that put the ‘wondrous Dolomites’ on a tourist map and provide travellers with the necessary toolkit to explore ‘such needle-pointed, pale, and altogether weird-looking pinnacles ... soaring into the evening sky’ (Gilbert and Churchill 1864, 24; Gasparetto 2012, 46). From that moment on, first in English and then in all other languages, the Venetian and Tyrolean Alps would be collectively identified as Dolomite Mountains (Gianolla 2008). Their text extended the name of the mineral to the entire region, and

their work provides the milestone that qualifies the classic literature on the Dolomites for the years to come. Unlike Murray's handbook, their guide deals with these mountains exclusively, and does not consider them as part of some amorphous southern or German Alpine range. While Gilbert and Churchill provided practical, handbook advice, similarly to Murray, their narrative is much more expansive, impressionistic, even, building on a curiosity for these mountains which was first identified in English by Murray (Chapter 2).

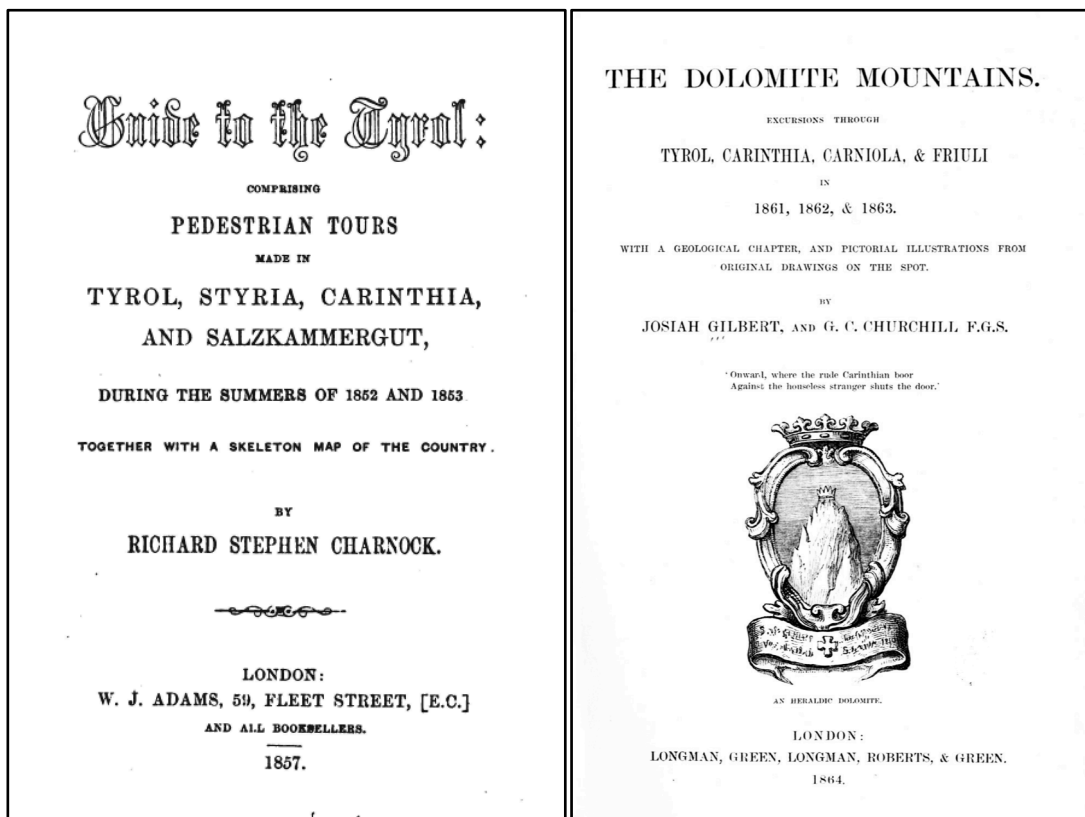


Fig. 4.2 - Left: Frontispiece of Charnock's *Guide to Tyrol* (1857). Right: Frontispiece of Gilbert and Churchill's book, *The Dolomite Mountains* (1864), with a crowned 'Heraldic Dolomite'.

Their style recycles the techniques of suspense and mystery not dissimilar to the one that characterized the Gothic novel, so beloved by Grand Tourists, picturesque voyagers, but also by mountaineers and scientists of the earlier generation (see Chapter 2). Going back, for a moment, to the evocative description of the Dolomites provided in 1875 by Thomas Cook in his *Handbook*

to Northern Italy, already discussed in Chapter 1, we now can find the source of its picturesque tone: 'We were impatient till we could explore them, and from that moment the Dolomites seized upon us with the spell of witchery' (Gilbert and Churchill, 1864, 24), 'the view to the south as the sun's rays began to slant was a fairy land for variety and intricacy of mountain form' (*ibid.*, 335), 'a wondrous scene of boiling mists and shivered pinnacles, all glory-tinted' (*ibid.*, 385), 'all the Scotch-like mist ... all the romantic richness and grandeur of the Italian Alps ... Changes so magical are the delight of the mountains' (*ibid.*, 410), 'the white ghostly mass of the Sella' (*ibid.*, 420), and so on.

The recirculation of Salvator Rosa's imagery is explicit:

These old roots are quite a feature in the wild scenery. White with age, and partially blackened by fire, they look as uncanny as may be, and perhaps have aided by their appearance the peasant superstition, which reckons it of evil omen to stumble over them in the dark. Here they gave a very Salvator Rosa aspect to many a craggy corner, where the light struck faintly down. If, according to some critics, Salvator is not like nature, nature, in these instances, was very like Salvator (*ibid.*, 151).

The gothic-like atmosphere of the Rosaesque scenery is here further enhanced by references to Ruskin ideally corrected by Gustave Doré:

Mr. Ruskin affirms that overhanging, or even perpendicular precipices, though often represented [in art] are not really found in nature. We agreed there that here [i.e. Antelao] there are plenty of both sorts, and the aptness of A—'s remark was at once appreciated when she compared the scene to one of Gustave Doré's marvellous grouping of peak and precipices in his illustrations to the 'Wandering Jew' ... Again occurred the resemblance to Doré's designs, far above the funereal tops gleamed pale spires of Dolomite, in ghastly accord; and below, the roots of destroyed trees contorted themselves into every dragon semblance (*ibid.*, 49-50).

The gaze filled with artistic memories and literary reminiscences composes here a Romantic landscape scenery, revealing the discursive interaction between Gilbert and A—, or Anna Maitland Laurie (1815-1867), Churchill's wife, who will be charged with filling an entire chapter with her letters from the Dolomites. As for Doré, Gilbert does not omit to state in a note that 'His magnificent illustrations to the "Inferno" ... are thoroughly Dolomitic in character' (*ibid.*, 149, note).

Gilbert and Churchill make use of and acknowledge Murray's handbook for highlighting the region to them in the first place. They begin their introduction by suggesting Murray's 'unlike any other mountains' reference 'struck' them, spurring them on to venture there (*ibid.*, 33). In terms of references, besides the already discussed Beaumont, White, Costello and Gordon Hall (see Chapter 2), Gilbert must here allude to Richard Stephen Charnock's *Guide to Tyrol* (1857; Fig. 4.2), in which, however, Murray is never quoted, and the only thing that he has to say about the Dolomites is simply their name: 'The Dolomite mountain, seen at St. Ulrich, is the Langkofel; the village of St. Christina is 4,000 feet above the level of the sea', without any comment about the scenery (*ibid.*, 73).

Murray, instead, provides the authors with useful information on the best aspects to view the mountains, the appropriate ways to traverse passes, and recommendations for accommodation, of which they often approve. Gilbert and Churchill, however, provide more colourful detail to various aspects that escaped Murray. When at moments Murray's 'scattered and brief notes of this district' fail to do them justice, they take some of his remarks to be 'unjust', 'short' or simply 'confused' (*ibid.*). Generally though, Murray is considered an 'authority' and is often quoted in full to satisfy their excited and enthusiastic anticipations. And yet, when they have to decide on the best view to admire the Lang Kofel, they reject Murray's suggestion to view it from the Gröden Thal,

maintaining, instead, that the Lang Kofel's 'vast proportions are better appreciated from the Seisser Alp' (*ibid.*, 113).

The British Quarterly Review of October 1864 noted that 'It will be no reflection upon the intelligence of our readers if we presume that few of them will be quite familiar with the term Dolomite Mountains' (Vaughan 1864, 333). *The Morning Post* reviewed *The Dolomite Mountains* and praised Gilbert and Churchill for their book – 'An interesting corner of Europe yet unexplored by English travellers may almost vie in rarity with fairy-land itself'. The review, which I attribute here to Amelia B. Edwards, who at that time was contributing to the newspaper, observed that Gilbert and Churchill's book placed these 'unfrequented' but 'remarkable' mountains on the 'general tourist route', granting that the authors had filled this 'distinct blank in Alpine literature' (Edwards 1864, 3). A particular welcoming review arrived even from Calcutta:

What right or title, we think we hear some of our readers exclaim, has a work on Carinthia, Carniola, Friuli, and Tyrol to a place in an Indian Review? What connection have the Dolomites with India? We believe, we shall be able to shew that of the many works which issue yearly from the London publishing houses, few have appeared of late years which have more really interest for Anglo-Indians, which have a more direct or a more pleasing connection with those whose lot it is to spend many years of their lives in this distant country, than the work we are now reviewing. The reason may be given in a few words. The Dolomites and the glorious country in which they raise their bare and rugged heads, are on the high road between England and India (*Calcutta Review* 1865).

There was no periodical or daily magazine that omitted mentioning the publication; and the reception was always enthusiastic. This was the first book by authors who were not members of the Alpine Club talking about the Dolomite scenery in these terms. It was a sensation without the sensational jargon of the Golden Age.



Fig. 4.3 - Edward Theodor Compton (del.), *Gilbert and Churchill arriving in Comelico with their Wives*, photogravure by H. Riffarth, in Emil Zsigmondy's *Im Hochgebirge: Wanderungen* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1889).

Gilbert and Churchill filled this blank, while acknowledging its reality. In responses to their arrival in various villages and inns, for example, they were often the first English people ever to have been there: 'A very hearty dame, full of hospitable bustle, received us at the door, especially gleeful when she found that we were English – the first she had ever seen' (Gilbert and Churchill 1864, 175). In contrast to Murray, they would not appear to take an excessively nationalist stance in their approach to the locals, nor did they criticize the environmental conditions or the hospitality they received in anyway, as Murray might have done (Thompson 2012, 174). Their position would seem to stress a complementary view of the local people in the Dolomites, over their English counterparts (Fig. 4.3). Slightly self-deprecatingly, they write: 'Whoever saw English ostlers and chamber-maids at prayer, while the mail was changing horses?', and, in reference to a Tyrolean roadside hostelry, they call it

'beautifully kept, and without any of that frowzy look so common in an English inn' (*ibid.*, 39, 102).

Several contemporary reviews of the book (see for instance Hunt 1864a; Mackay 1864; Masson 1864; Vaughan 1864), accept the nomenclature of the 'Dolomite Mountains', following the precedent set by Gilbert and Churchill, rather than the previously generic categorization of the Venetian Alps. But perhaps the most significant feature of *The Dolomite Mountains* is its contribution to the region's draw as a location for travel in its own right, for enthusiasts, explorers and tourists alike. Previously, the 'out-of-the-way' Dolomites were a 'mystery only to be guessed at', as tourists 'unconsciously' glanced upon their 'strange' peaks with a 'wondering gaze', as 'nobody really wanted to see them'. Gilbert and Churchill 'went, saw, conquered and annexed' the Dolomites; it was already predicted, at the time, that they would have been 'doubtless for all years annexed, to the tourist's recognized domain' (Hunt 1864a, 422).

The type of 'conquering' that Gilbert and Churchill undertook in the Dolomites was not coloured by the nationalistic or sensationalist overtones of the Golden Age of mountaineering, as seen in the previous chapter. Their approach to mountaineering was a much less serious affair than the frantic rhetoric espoused, for example, by Albert Smith or Edward Whymper. Two friends wrote *The Dolomite Mountains*, each in the company of his wife, and the book was only completed by successive expeditions (Hunt 1864b, 360). The prerogatives of the Golden Age advocated the British conquering of peaks before all other nations, but this travel guide is suggestive of possessing mountain scenery for different reasons. Its goal would appear to be attractive to an audience of nature lovers, those searching out geological treasures, connoisseurs of art and enthusiasts of literature; those wishing to ramble,

rather than to climb, up to a vantage point where the best 'scenic effect' for a sketch or watercolour could be achieved:

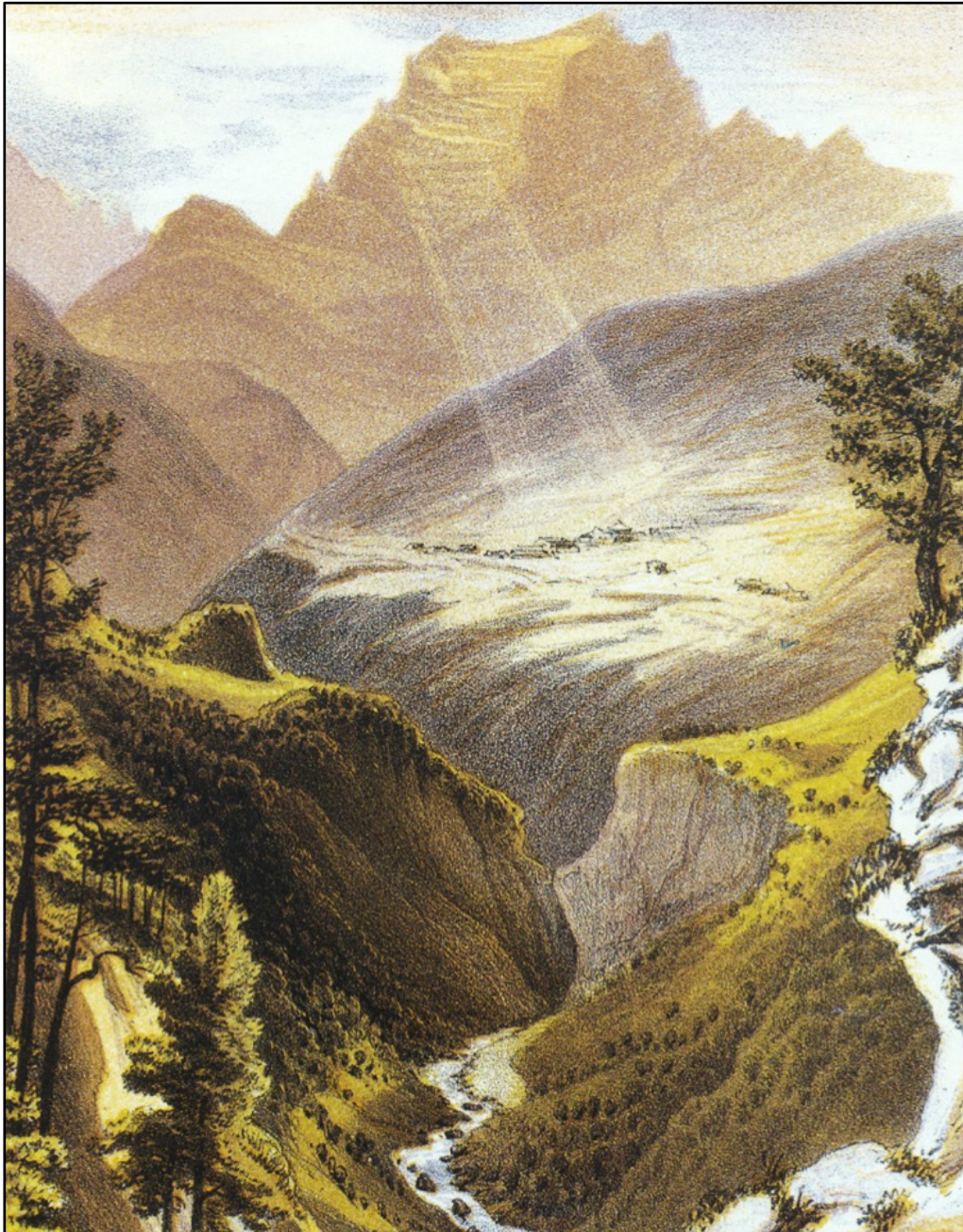


Fig. 4.4 - Josiah Gilbert's artistic rendition of the Pelmo Massif, *The Dolomite Mountains* (1864).

To the south, and close at hand, beheld, to our delight, the great mountain of our mid-day wonderment. All ruddy in the sunset, its pinnacled façade rose like some stupendous cathedral in the vista of the

valley, and Caprile nestled at its foot. That view, favoured certainly at the moment by its suddenness, and by the striking effect of light, remains almost unrivalled in our Alpine experience. The mountain is Monte Civita (Gilbert and Churchill 1864, 136).

Another contemporary 1864 reviewer in *The Examiner* confirms the success of this 'new' approach, arguing that by applying a heavily executed artistic element, and the inclusion of several detailed drawings and coloured illustrated plates (Fig. 4.4 and Fig. 4.5), allows for the subject of mountaineering to be treated in a novel and visual way: 'We have no doubt that a reading of this volume, and the sight of the wondrous peaks depicted with great force and spirit by the artist [Gilbert], will send many a wanderer to the Dolomite region this summer' (Hunt 1864a, 423).

Qualified by a subsequent age of mountaineering, climbing in the Dolomites started later than in other Alpine regions. The Western Alps of Switzerland and France, for instance, seduced competing nations, and individuals, with the compelling prize of conquering these mountains before all others owing to their superior height and difficulty (see Chapter 3). John Ball, naturalist and first president of the Alpine Club, significantly marks the beginning of English climbing in the Dolomites with his ascent of the Pelmo (3168 m) on the 19th of September 1857, or at least the first one who climbed it and reported his ascent (Angelini 1953, 12-26; 1987). His *Guide to the Eastern Alps* (Ball 1868) combines scientific exploration with the burgeoning touristic attraction of the Dolomites; interestingly, the section on the Dolomites was also published separately with the title *South Tyrol and Venetian or Dolomite Alps* (Ball 1873).

Ball too is an enthusiast of the Dolomites' 'unique' and 'strange forms' and relishes their 'fantastic beauty and wilderness'. His effusive adoration, however, goes even further than that of Gilbert and Churchill. He admits at one point, for example, that his personal predilection may have led him to exaggeration, but

feels experienced enough to argue that ‘a traveller who has visited all the other mountain regions of Europe, and remains ignorant of the scenery of the Dolomite Alps, has yet to make acquaintance with Nature in one of her loveliest and most fascinating aspects’ (Ball 1868, 400). His guide to the *Eastern Alps* would be the last of three volumes of his meticulously researched *Alpine Guide* published in the 1860s; Ball, though, ‘was happy to quote verbatim passages from Murray into his own guide’, when appropriate (Palmowski 2002, 108).

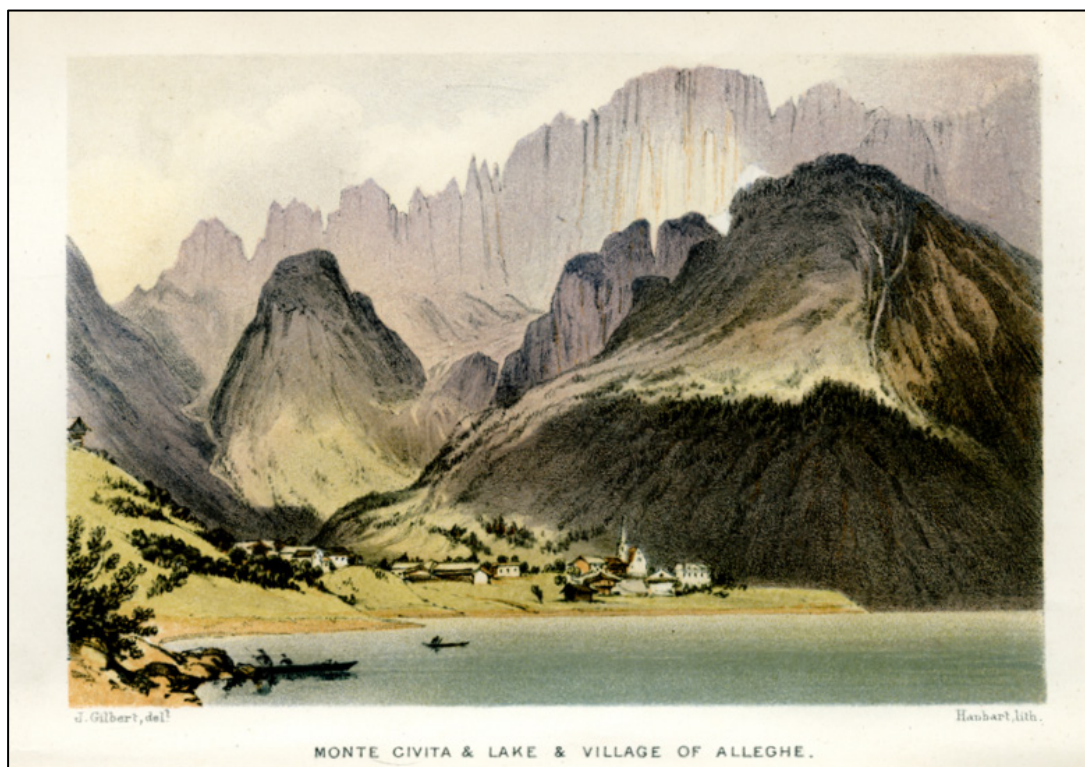


Fig. 4.5 – Josiah Gilbert, *Monte Civita and Lake and Village of Alleghe*, in Gilbert and Churchill 1864.

One contemporary review of the guide reiterates the touristic impact and usefulness that writing such as Ball’s had, suggesting that it told the tourist where to go and how best to do it. *The Pall Mall Gazette* put it in 1869, ‘To the knapsack tourist Mr. Ball’s guide is especially valuable, as it gives him not only every possible route and variation of route in the higher Alps, but also ample and practical instructions for making the more ambitious expeditions’ (*The Pall Mall Gazette*, no. 1296, April 8, 1869; see also *London Quarterly Review* 1869,

The Edinburgh Review 1869, and Hooker 1890). Some critics of Ball's guide, conversely, questioned the very motives behind such a work, somehow acknowledging implicitly the resemblance between the Dolomites and the English rockscape: 'an Englishman does not require to travel to the Eastern Alps to study his science. His own land is the epitome of the geology of the world ... no region at present explored presents all the features of the earth's crust in such combination and completeness as Great Britain' (*The Morning Post*, no. 29598, October 20, 1868, 3).

The books discussed above were central in securing the Dolomites within the English geographical imagination. The guidebook culture established a draw that combined to fulfil both scientific curiosity and a sentimentality that sought out an unspoilt landscape, and helped codify the ritualistic and touristic nature of travel to the Dolomites, popularized by Gilbert and Churchill almost as 'Gothic Mountains'. These guidebooks 'established a set of interpretations by which travellers could demonstrate their personal cultivation' (Kilbride 2003, 559); but, more importantly, they recycled a set of established symbols and practices that suggested what to see and how to see it according to established 'art of travel', utterly pivotal in the 'invention' of the Dolomites during the Silver Age.

Edwards' Sentimental Voyage

If Gilbert and Churchill's *The Dolomite Mountains* was chiefly responsible for securing the draw of the Dolomites (and determining 'how to do the Dolomites'), the success of *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys: A Midsummer Ramble in the Dolomites* (1873), by Amelia B. Edwards (1831-1892; Manley 2004), is principally attributable in creating, symbolically, a universally romantic image of the Dolomites, beyond that of the examples already mentioned, as an uncorrupted and sentimental landscape for a British audience. Her book satisfied different goals from those of Murray, Gilbert, and Ball,

preferring a more adventurous and playful approach that highlights the outlandish and eccentric elements of the Dolomite landscape. These features become valorising elements of the Silver Age.

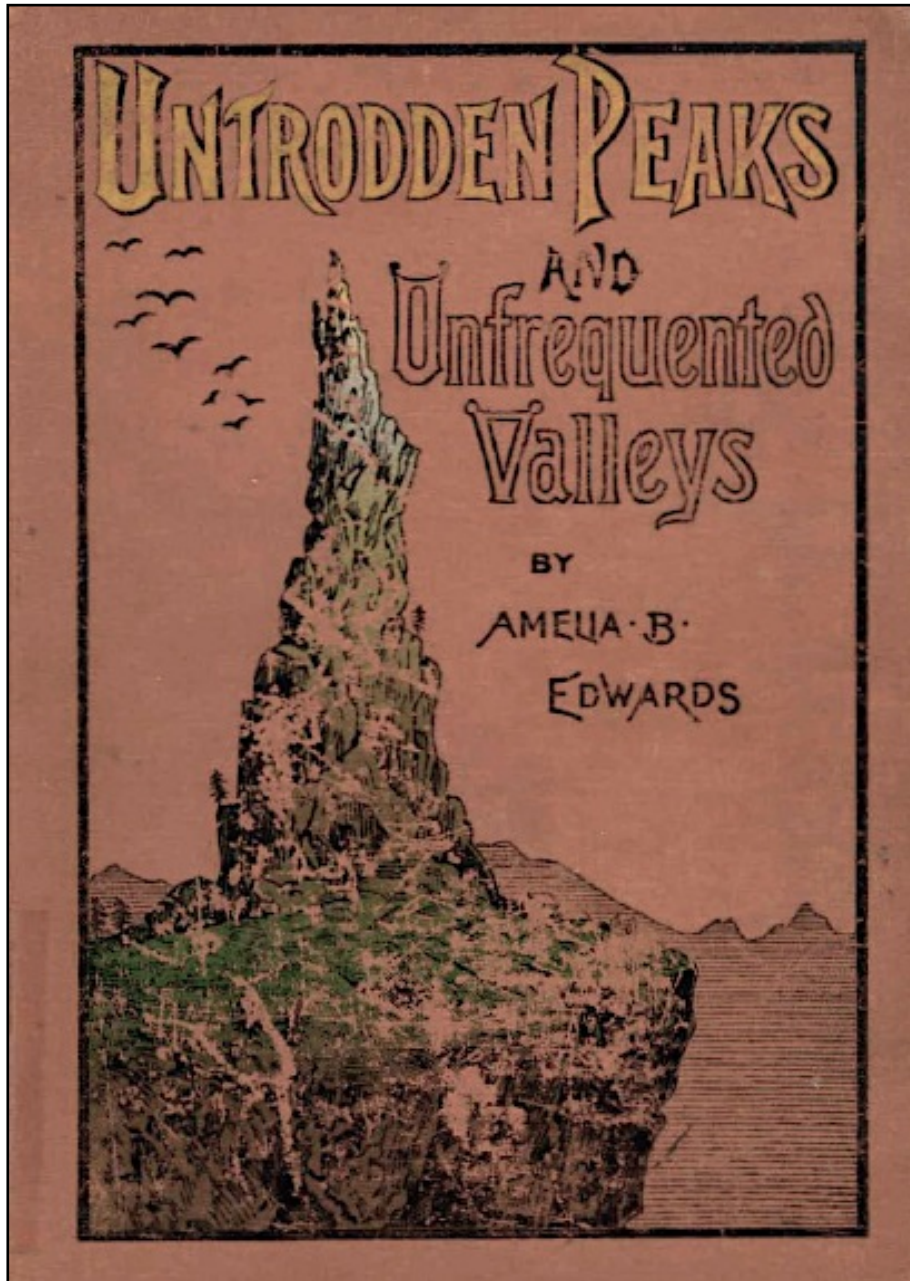


Fig. 4.6 - Cover of Edwards' *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys*, 1873.

Scholars of Amelia Edwards' travel writing have tended to focus on her later contributions to Egypt and her knowledge of its ancient civilization, highlighting the acclaimed descriptions of her exotic journeys, featured in *A Thousand Miles*

up the Nile (Moon 2006; Nittel 2001; Pomeroy 2005). Through this authoritative book, and the lecturing in America and England that followed its success, the daring spinster secured her position as amateur-turned-professional and intellectual in the field of Egyptology.⁹ However, the narrative style that she established in her serious Nile account, although different, was first demonstrated in her more playful, and yet understudied, Dolomite book, here referred to as *Untrodden Peaks* (Fig. 4.6). In this she demonstrated an interlacing of gender with geography using an animated voice that re-circulated scientific and antiquarian tropes with personal and poetic descriptions.

The Victorian woman's travel account has also been much debated in recent years (Peukert 2010; Pomeroy 2005; Nittel 2001; Guelke and Morin 2001; Williams 1973). Patricia O'Neill, for example, has argued that 'travel writing specifically offered authority to women because their work was based on first hand experience, rather than mere reading in the literary tradition' (O'Neill 2009, 45). Edwards was already established as a novelist and hardened traveller by the time of *Untrodden Peaks*; but this account clearly demonstrates her confidence, and therefore cultural 'authority', in combining scientific commentary with a cultural history of the Dolomites and making explicit use of her knowledge of art and literature. Her lucid discussions of the art, history, geology and culture of the Dolomite peaks and valleys is expressive of her command of these subjects. But her expertise is not the one of a mountaineer. In a revealing moment, while simultaneously subscribing to pre-conceived ideas about gender, she in fact indicates that she was not a mountaineer in 'any sense of the word' (Edwards 1873, 158). It has been argued that mountaineers of the Alpine Club secured for themselves, as well as the armchair mountaineer, an idea of mountain landscapes as the terrain of Englishmen, where the sublimity of the scenery could secure personal, national and, particularly, masculine

triumph. While she happily accepts the dominance of the male-centred world of mountaineering, Edwards begins in *Untrodden Peaks* to implicitly challenge it.

Early on in *Untrodden Peaks*, Edwards comically describes the foregoing of her unsuitable English guide for the more favourable assistance of local Italian ones. She constantly expresses a keen interest in the local people of the Dolomites, and participates in their festivities and church services, showing 'little of the British Protestant's prejudice towards the Italian Catholic population' (O'Neill 2009, 46). But while Edwards' concern for these things achieved an inversion of the typical behaviour exhibited by some Englishman towards mountain communities up until this point, she also draws upon and recirculates the Romantic narrative style and symbols of her Golden Age predecessors, and, occasionally, demonstrates a level of cultural and national advantage over the country and people she observes. If Smith's Mont Blanc show demonstrated the bombastic fervour of the Golden Age of mountaineering and secured the Alps as a playground for Englishmen searching to assert their authority and to appropriate the world, Edwards, alternatively, first exploits this symbolism then transforms it into order to attract a wider audience and promote the Dolomites as 'beautiful' and as an alternative 'playground far more attractive than the Alps' (Edwards 1873, ix). This move from the 'old' to the 'new playground' suggests that the goals of being in the Dolomites are motivated by different concerns from those that attracted men to the Alps in the Golden Age.

Edwards, for instance, is interested in the art of Titian, and in searching out other acclaimed Venetian masters who originated in and near the Dolomites. The strenuousness required by the Dolomite region itself is not necessarily related to the physical exertion exhibited by the professional mountaineer. The Dolomites are, instead, a landscape of 'midsummer rambles' rather than uncompromising mountain ascents (*ibid.*, 384); although, she recommended the

use of a side-saddle because 'the passes are too long and too fatiguing for ladies on foot' (*ibid.*, ix). Similarly to Gilbert and Churchill, to whom she deferentially referred regularly to for authority on geology and art, Edwards communicates the uniqueness and curiousness of the Dolomites to her readers. To these potential travellers and tourists, the peculiarity of the region is highlighted, not least in her efforts to best locate and recommend locations to sketch scenery, seek out art, and to botanize.

In contrast to Gilbert's and Churchill's gothic colouring of their descriptions, Edwards seems to be a stronger emphasis on the ethnographic quality of her writing – in a way she successfully blends the cultivated connoisseurship of Stuart Costello's 'Anglo-Italian' outlook (see Chapter 2) with Gilbert's scenic gaze. Her stories and sketches of the Dolomite people and their reaction to her are clearly important. Women, notably, provide a focus to this element of Edwards' scrutiny. In one telling episode she accounts her sketching of a woman from Livinallongo:

One very handsome woman ... tempted by the promise of a florin, came home with me in order that I might make a careful coloured study of her costume. She was tall, and so finely formed that not even that hideous sacque and shapeless bodice could disguise the perfection of her figure ... A more majestic face I never saw, nor one so full of a sweet, impenetrable melancholy (Edwards 1873, 96-97).

This observation of the woman's beauty and her subsequent refusal to be paid for the sitting is indicative of the mountain woman's so-called 'good-breeding', but provides one example of many where Edwards' close-detailed sketching of landscape and people is executed in both words and in drawing. Edwards' travelling companions were Lucy Renshaw and Renshaw's maid. She met her in Rome and only referred to Renshaw as 'L' in *Untrodden Peaks* (Moon 2006, 92);

that Edwards and Renshaw were lesbian lovers is a possibility to which various episodes in *Untrodden Peaks* 'may lend some colour' (Rees 1998, 32–33).

The unknown and unfrequented aura of the Dolomites is the core theme of *Untrodden Peaks*. In the later part of the nineteenth century, travel to the Dolomites was still relatively restricted owing to the lack and quality of rail and road connections.¹⁰ She accounts for, in fact, a deviation from the originally planned journey, so that the journey is itself unexpected and unplanned. The new, more difficult journey is inspired, instead, by the romance and 'wondrous panorama' of the 'faint blue' mountains in the distance seen from Venice and provides just reason for her alternate itinerary:

We began, somehow, to think and talk less and less of our proposed tour in the Engadine; to look more and more longingly towards the north-eastern horizon; and to dream in a vague way of those mystic mountains beyond Verona which we knew of, somewhat indefinitely, as the Dolomites (Edwards 1873, 4).

Here Edwards would assume the role of both subject and object of a nostalgic gaze of a Grand Tour devotee that fostered refined picturesque viewing.

Differently to the previous travel styles of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, she is not averse to 'roughing it' in the mountains and deciding upon a more challenging trip away from comforts of more a traditional itinerary. She is typically British, however, in the sense that she chooses to approach the Dolomites from Venice, rather than, say, from starting at points perceived as less cultured or prestigious, such as those established for Alpine excursions in Austria (see Chapter 5). Potentially in a further effort to imply sophistication and the educated authority of a traditional Continental traveller, Edwards is keen to highlight her experience of quintessentially British Grand Tour locations and subjects, such as Naples,

Tivoli, Pisa, Sorrento and Rome, Titian, Bellini, Raphael, Botticelli, and Albercht Dürer – and of course, Venice and Titian.

Venice and its related culture and art provide the main focus of her cultural and artistic focus. Her account of the approach to the Dolomites, or the ‘grey-blue mountains’, that she had ‘been looking at so longingly from Venice’ (*ibid.*, 18), is primarily framed within the cultural background of the city and its lagoon; her sustained loyalty to Venice’s significance is made evident through her constant preference for its history and art as she zigzags over the border between Italy and Austria. In one moment among many, she describes how the term ‘canali’ is adopted in the Dolomites and applied to streams and torrents, which ‘affords a curious instance, among many others, of how the impress of Venetian thought yet lingers throughout these parts of South Tyrol ... To the citizen of Venice, every river and rivulet was a canal; and where Venice gave her laws, she gave her phraseology also’ (*ibid.*, 253). In line with her literary and artistic credentials, Edwards is keen to couch her experiences of the Dolomites within high-art references; the Venetian High Renaissance master, Titian, born in Cadore, remained for Edwards throughout *Untrodden Peaks*, the most sought-after point of reference: ‘the dark, jagged peaks that closed the distance were of just that rich, deep, incredible ultra marine blue that Titian loved and painted so often in his landscape backgrounds’ (1873, 40). This is fully articulated in the discussion of the following chapter.

The Silver Age of mountaineering – one could say ‘the age of rambling’ – as it is proposed, is motivated by a recirculation of symbols of an earlier moment in the cultural history of travel on the continent, and particularly by the British fascination with Venice and its related art and architecture, culture and history. But it is also motivated by deviation from, and novelty and playfulness with, established mores and classic itineraries. How this playfulness is revealed within the Silver Age, typified by *Untrodden Peaks*, comes about through

Edwards' uncovering and unravelling of the Dolomite region as a cabinet of rare and precious curiosities, both natural and man-made. Her flower collecting and geological observations documents her knowledge of specimens of scientific note and rarity, while her architectonic remarks on the mountain forms place her in line with Stephen and notably Ruskin, who saw the Alps as schools and cathedrals (Hélard 2005; Ozturk 2010). In contrasting the views of Monte Civetta from the Val di Zoldo and Alleghe she makes use of particularly telling metaphors:

Calm and perpendicular, majestic on the side of Alleghe, here it is wild, tossed, tormented, and irregular. From Alleghe, it appears as a vast, upright, symmetrical screen – here it consists of a long succession of huge, straggling buttresses divided by wild glens, the birthplaces of mists and torrents. If from Caprile the mountain looks, as I have said more than once, like a mighty organ, from here it as if each vertical pipe in that organ-front were but the narrow end of rock in which each of these buttresses terminates. Looking at them thus in lateral perspective, I can compare them, wild and savage as they are, to nothing save the vista of exquisitely carved and decorated flying buttresses just below the roof of Milan Cathedral, which is known as the Giardino Botanico (Edwards 1873, 329).

One particular instance of Edwards' sentimental tone, in unearthing the curiousness of the Dolomites, is her description of St. Ulrich, in the Austrian Tyrol. She calls it the 'capital of Toy-land' for its exclusive focus on the intensive yet home-based manufacturing of traditional wooden toys for children: 'those wooden soldiers with supernaturally small waists and triangular noses – all these – all the cheap, familiar, absurd treasures of your earliest childhood and of mine – they all came, Reader, from St. Ulrich!' (*ibid.*, 367; Jarka and Jarka 2006, 284-289). The descriptions of St. Ulrich sums up some of Edwards' thinking on the Dolomites; she regularly uses a toy metaphor to provide narrative style to

her 'dream-like' portrayal of the people and landscape. Her descriptions of 'toy-like' vernacular architecture, the 'fantastic' and the 'so unfamiliar, and yet so unmistakable' qualities of the mountain scenery, as villages and landscape features themselves become toy-like as they fall into the distance, would seem to allow her to promote the Dolomites as a landscape of picturesque fantasy. Francis Elliot anticipated this feeling in a more spirited way, making of Cortina the stage for a Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bangesque scene: 'Three miles along a flat road brought us to cheerful, white-walled Cortina (in Ampezzo), standing among bare fields like a toy town, with its toy church and campanile, and two hotels, painfully neat and civilised, and wide awake' (Elliot 1870, 355).

Edwards, instead, by evoking of a world of childhood imagination – 'a fairy land', as she wrote in the review on Gilbert and Churchill (Edwards 1864, 3) – endows the Dolomite landscape with a 'special and symbolic meaning for the representation of an imagined scene in a circumscribed sphere' (Erikson 1978, 42–43; see also Teverson 2013).¹¹ Differently from Albert Smith's Mont Blanc board game which motivated children to imaginatively conquer the Mont Blanc, Edwards' writing is involved in constructing a Dolomite landscape that is deviant to the Golden Age rhetoric, which placed real-life mountain experiences in the realm of adult-only male experts; *Untrodden Peaks* produces a nostalgically sentimental landscape with which readers could associate their childhood memories: a landscape that they could fantasize about, but also a real and accessible landscape to visit and enjoy – a mnemonic topography of childhood. Smith's board game prepared its players a metaphoric conquering of summits, for children to imagine one day being a mountaineer. The game's competitive, Golden Age, structure did not allow for some yearning return to some toy-filled childhood.

The landscape Edwards constructs in *Untrodden Peaks* is sketched, both textually and pictorially. And she, like many travel writers, 'deployed

perspective, horizon, distance, colour, and shade, in ways designed to evoke visual images' of her subjects and to control the gaze of her readers (Pomeroy 2005, 34). For example, when describing the landscape near the village of Caprile, Edwards talks of the elevation at which she stood, the mountain ahead, the valley behind, 'the morning sunshine hundreds of feet below', the 'greenish-blue' colour of the lake of Alleghe, and 'while between that point and this, there extend, distance beyond distance, the fir-woods, the pastures, and the young corn-slopes of Monte Pezza' (Edwards 1873, 201).

Edwards overtly tackles the interconnectedness of the visual and textual and justifies somehow her descriptive limits in her writing by drawing attention to how artists may better render the scenery she attempts textually to describe, like when she describes the view from Lago di Serravalle:

Two tiny white houses with green jalousies and open Italian balconies at the head of the lake, a toy church on a grassy knoll, and a square mediaeval watchtower clinging to a ridge of rock above, make up the details of a picture so serene and perfect that even Turner at his sunniest period could scarcely have idealized it' (*ibid.*, 27).

Such narrative techniques employed by Edwards were made integral to the textual construction of the physical places she described; they allowed for a blurring between a construction of the Dolomites 'textual pictures' and 'pictorial texts' (Mitchell 1995).

Of the 'pyramidal mass of the Monte Pera', her picturesque viewing refers to both classical art itself and the landscape's 'living quality' that makes it particularly suitable for sketching:

For light and shadow, for composition, for all that goes to make up a landscape in the grand style, the picture is perfect. Nothing is wanting-not even the foreground group to give it life; for here come a couple of bullock trucks across the bridge, as primitive and picturesque as if they

had driven straight out of the fifteenth century. It is just such a subject as Poussin might have drawn, and Claude have coloured (Edwards 1873, 132).

The pilgrimage to the Dolomites, however, becomes a modified version of this lived experience of art; it is through an established ritualistic approach to travel, and its material implications, that the Dolomites are transformed from the subject of art into the object of physical reality in the mind Edwards' readers.

But *Untrodden Peaks* also makes use of several real pictures and accompanying illustrations such as *Titian's Birthplace* (Fig. 4.7) and *The Sasso di Ronch* (Fig. 4.8) to add a visual dimension to her text. Take, for instance, the following example, in which she equates the 'giant needle' of the Sasso di Ronch, textually and visually, to a more familiar English scene, that of the profile of the Palace of Westminster, as well as those recognizable profiles associated with classical interpretations of mountaineering, the Matterhorn:

For not only is the whole appearance of the Sasso changed in the strangest way by being seen in profile, but behind the ridge on which the Sasso stands there is revealed a vast circular amphitheatre, like the crater of an extinct volcano, strewn with rent crags, precipices riven from top to bottom, and enormous fragments of rock, many of which are at least as big as the clock-tower at Westminster ... Someone has compared the Matterhorn to the head and neck of a warhorse rearing up behind the valley of Zermatt; so might the Sasso di Ronch from this point be compared to the head and neck of a giraffe. Standing upon its knife-edge of ridge-all precipice below, all sky above, the horizon one long sweep of jagged peaks-it makes as wild and weird a subject as ever I sat down to sketch before or since! (*ibid.*, 204-205)

Based on Edwards' own sketches, such illustrations were 'clearly part of the appeal of travel books to armchair travellers at home' (Pomeroy 2005, 35-36), and acted to document and authenticate her experience of the Dolomites.



Fig. 4.7 – ‘Titian’s Birthplace’, from *Untrodden Peaks* (1873).

If artistic sketching was, in part, a ‘traditional feminine accomplishment’, the use of art to ‘record and present the new experiences and new subject matter made possible through travel was undeniably empowering’ for female travel writers (*ibid.*). Edwards’ use of sketching, both textual and illustrative, reinforced her position as a writer and an authority on the Dolomites, provided an entertaining and marketable educational tool for a nation of armchair tourists, whilst it broadened societal assumptions about what landscapes were appropriate for females to discuss, sketch, and even experience in the Victorian period. It may be true that a ‘capable’ Edwards appropriated and ‘captured’ the Dolomite landscape in this way, and consequently established a new ‘feminized’ and empowered perspective through which women could gaze upon landscape. At the same time, however, there is evidence that Edwards operates a cultural ‘superiority’ over the local people she encounters – akin to a detachment seen in Murray who somehow framed his readers as non-participant observers.

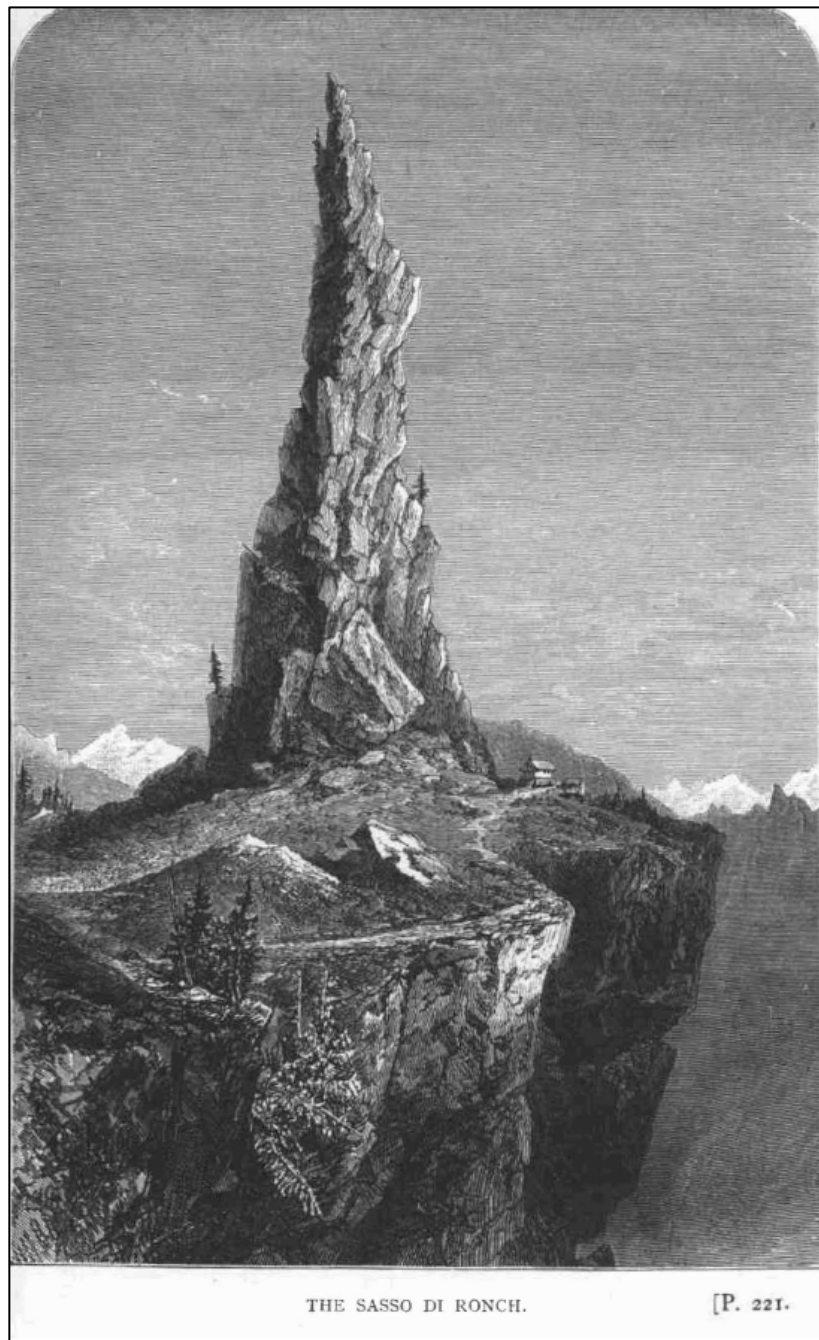


Fig. 4.8 - 'Sasso di Ronch', from *Untrodden Peaks* (1873).

One evening at Forno di Zoldo, for instance, Edwards humorously accounted that her sketching was disturbed by 'one old woman in wooden clogs', who surveyed her drawings with a 'ludicrous expression of bewilderment' (Edwards 1873, 339-340). The woman asked Edwards why she was sketching the mountains, and she responded by saying that it would help her later remember

it. 'And will *that* make you remember it?' said the old woman 'incredulously' to Edwards; in reply to Edwards' explanation that she is from England, the old woman exclaimed: 'From England! Jesu Maria! From England! And where is England? *Is it near Milan?* ... Have you then no mountains or trees in England?' (*ibid.*, 339-340). In this representation of a woman, like all others in *Untrodden Peaks*, one observes the novelist's pen at work. The Dickensian-like caricature of an archaic, primitive simplicity in this passage is, however, contrasted to other moments when women are portrayed much more 'handsomely'.

Edwards' narration of her 'pilgrimage' in the Dolomites also allows her to interact with and observe the aesthetic value of religious paintings and Catholic artefacts without, what Marjorie Morgan calls, the pressure of a 'centuries-old tendency to see the Christian world as polarized between the monolithic forces of Protestantism and Catholicism' (Morgan 2001, 89). O'Neill similarly argues that 'English Protestants' general sense of superiority accordingly included religious difference' (2009, 53). In *Untrodden Peaks*, Edwards, a Protestant, does not reprove the Catholic religion, its artistic patronage or its rituals, with any attitude that could have dubbed Catholicism as primitive, corrupted and superstitious, which was a prevailing view in the Victorian period (Griffin 2004, 136). Notwithstanding the established Victorian mistrust of Catholicism, Edwards, in fact, regularly retorts to Catholic priests for authority on various topics and locations, and often partakes, if at a distance, in both mass and festival. She participates in religious processions on more than one occasion.

The artistic culture of the Dolomites is undeniably linked to religious sponsorship, and Edwards' seeking out of Titian leads her, of course, to several Catholic churches. Her view of the priests she meets is coloured by their understanding of their parish's history and knowledge of the art they house in their churches. Of the parish priest in Cadore: 'In point of taste and education he is superior to the general run of Tyrolean pastors. He takes an eager interest in

all that relates to Titian and the Vecelli; and he believes Cadore to be the axis on which the world goes round' (Edwards 1873, 122-123). Edwards' concentration on art allows her detachment from any religious association that could have otherwise tainted her standing with her readership, allowing an interaction with and observation of religion.

While being potentially conditioned by the religious culture of England she does not express superiority over the observed Dolomite religious identity. On the Catholic clergy of the Dolomites, Gilbert and Churchill had said, conversely, that they could 'not admire the rites they administered, not their connivance at peasant superstitions' (Gilbert and Churchill 1864, 250). Edwards' ethnography is both distinct from earlier mountain accounts, for example, and of its time. The people of the village of Selva are 'in truth, mere savages – rosy, good-natured; but as ignorant and uncivilised as Aboriginal Australians' (Edwards 1873, 346), for example. It is not hard to observe a certain level of personal emancipation in Edwards, and her desire to be taken seriously.

The possibility of her becoming the first person, also the first woman, to ascend the Sasso Bianco, the summit of Monte Pezzo, provides the reader of *Untrodden Peaks* with an interesting and complex level of anticipation, framed within Edwards position as an imperial subject and object. This important account begins with her Italian guide, Clementi, praising the mountain 'not as a mountain of the first class', but being very high 'for a mountain of the second'. Edwards is incredulous that it 'escaped' an ascent up until then, but readers are informed that it is 'too difficult for ordinary travellers', but not too difficult for mountaineers of the Italian 'Club Alpino'. Clementi states that mountaineers such as John Ball or Francis Ford Tuckett 'care nothing for a mountain which they can swallow in one mouthful' (Edwards 1873, 206-207). With much criticism of the mountain in terms of its lack of interest to 'real' mountaineers due to its relative height and simplicity to ascend, Edwards' 'prima ascensione

(sic)' is made significant by her insistence that she is an 'ordinary traveller' (*ibid.*). She is reserved in taking any heroic glory from her achievement, modestly suggesting that the climb may have been 'too tough to be swallowed in even many mouthfuls' (*ibid.*). Rather than with the triumph, Edwards is seduced by the 'romance' and of the ascent – with the reference to a 'Solitaire board' gaming metaphor, Edwards arguably trivializes the ascent.

Again, Edwards' treads carefully not to trespass into the masculine world of mountaineering. At the same time, she does manage to accomplish the ascent and devotes an entire chapter to the endeavour, adding gravity to it. Highlighting the aesthetic qualities of the perspective granted from the summit – being in the 'very centre of the Dolomites, like the middle ball upon a Solitaire board, surrounded on all sides by the giants of the district' – Edwards carefully prioritizes her motivation as the view, from which she successfully identified 'over fifty great summits, including all the Dolomite giants' (*ibid.*, 316). Edwards here bestows significance on the geographical and aesthetic viewpoint from the summit, rather than on the idea of mountaineering competency, suggested by the high altitudes and testing climbing of the Golden Age, for which she is keen to separate herself and her ascent from: 'I doubt, indeed, if there be any other point from which all the giants of the district can be seen at once, and to so much advantage' (*ibid.*, 320). It is the conquest of scenery, rather than of a peak by which she is attracted.

In a revealing moment of self-congratulation, however, she recounted that after her descent she was met by the village folk of Caprile who called her the first 'stranger' to 'have cared' about this 'bella montagna' (*ibid.*, 319). Her focus on the view is additionally significant for us; she tells the reader that if she had a clearer, 'better day', she would 'have seen straight down to Venice' (*ibid.*). This understanding of the geography of the Dolomites – being 'in the very centre' – not only cements the Dolomites' association with Venice in terms of proximity,

but also inverts the cultural and artistic background of Venice into a foregrounding core. The Dolomites in this sense become the geographical backdrop of Venice and are transformed into the geographical stage where Venice, instead, can be played out and imagined in the background, with the mountains taking centre stage. In this way, she inverts the traditional construction of the map of Italy, even, reimagining a new perspective that casts the image of the familiar peninsular oriented to the south (Fig. 4.9).

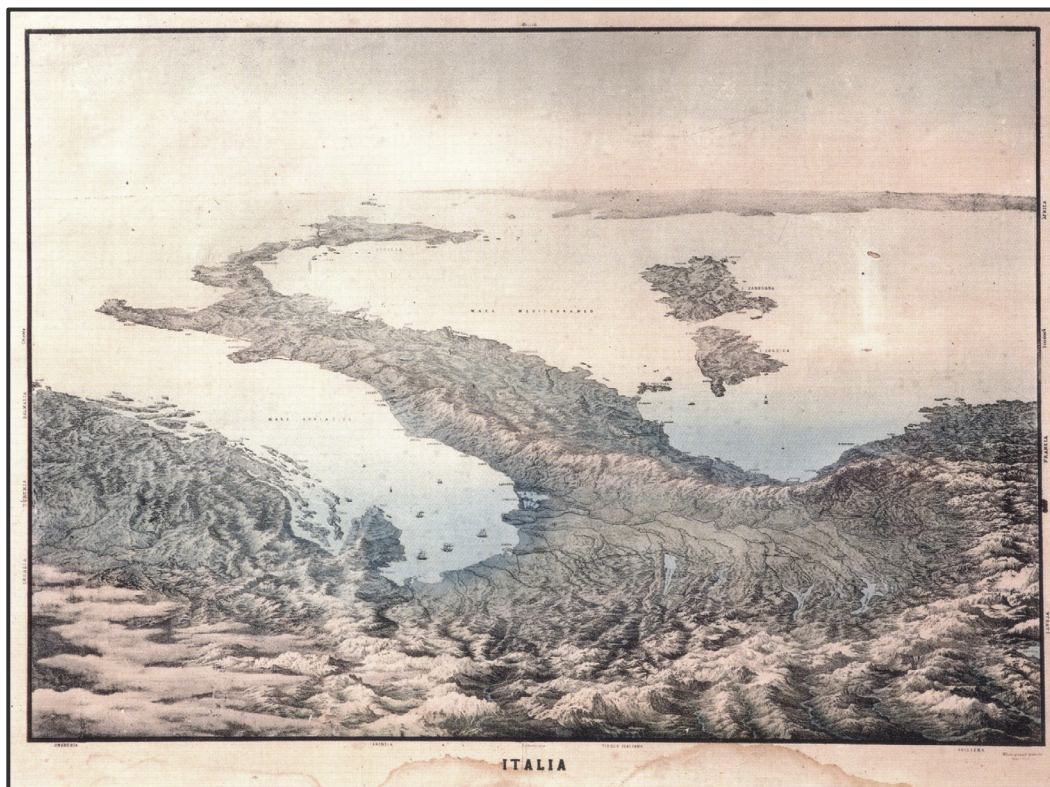


Fig. 4.9 - *View of Italy Oriented to the South*, 19th century, 50x69cm, Private Collection (formally in the Alessandro Stefanini Collection), sold at Semenzato, Reggio Emilia, 17-18 October 2009, cat. 1453, nr. 145, p. 40.

Although Edwards' admission that she was not an expert mountaineer and that 'a more competent traveller' might have better determined the height of the Sasso Bianco with more accuracy, she nonetheless attempts scientific measurement of height with a barometer and calculates this according to temperature. By detailing her correspondence with the 'eminent mountaineer' Francis Fox Tuckett (1834-1913), who confirmed her measurements, any

intrusion into the masculine world of scientific deduction, however, is mollified. Despite Edwards' original nonchalance towards the gravity of her ascent the inclusion of Tuckett's communication with her suggests that she does take the scientific aspects of mountaineering seriously; but she ultimately refers to the male expert for vindication of her geographical knowledge.

The mid to late-Victorian period allowed women to 'validate their voice as one of objective science only by picking up topics in which men had no interest or about which they had less opportunity to learn', such as the customs of women (Kearns 1997, 456). This thinking would have allowed Edwards to sketch landscape and the appearance of people, as long as she remained immune to the sociological or wider implications that generating this material meant. It is worth remembering that her book received positive reviews from the *Geological Magazine*, in 1873, as Edwards 'enters thoroughly into the enjoyment of mountain scenery she describes and delineates in so graphic and charming a manner' (*Geological Magazine* 1873, 386). Overall, however, Edwards seems here to please herself in acting alternatively as a mountaineer, as a climber, as a scientist, as an artist, as a tourist, showing to her reader the ability to do a little bit of everything. For her, the new playground is this – a space in which it is possible to perform different roles, crossing the boundaries between gender differences, disciplinary competences and ethnic divides.

There are several other moments when Edwards refers to Murray, Gilbert and Churchill, and Ball for authority; Ball's *Guide to the Eastern Alps* and its maps, for instance, are utilized for their geological references and providing details on the height of mountains. The insistence on venerating Ball and other British mountaineers, especially in her detailing of how local people and her Italian guides held Ball, Stephen and even Smith, for example, in such high regard, perhaps goes some way in securing the British legacy of mountaineering in the mind-set of the Italians she meets.¹² For example:

Leaving Primiero for Predazzo ... but stay; how can I leave leave Primiero without one word of Signor Prospero? – Signor Prospero, genial, fussy, courteous, enthusiastic, indefatigable, voluble; Signor Prospero, whose glory it is to be a member of the Italian Club Alpino; who believes the British nation to be the most enlightened that the sun shines upon; who so worships the very name of Ball and Leslie Stephen that he all but takes his hat off when he mentions them, as if they were his patron saints; who vaguely imagines that every English tourist must be in some way or other illustrious; that all our autographs are worth having; and that the universal family of Smith represents the flower of the human race! (Edwards 1873, 209).¹³

Despite her adamant deference and recommendation to not ‘do better than refer the reader’ to the ‘admirable’ male authors and mountaineers detailed here, *Untrodden Peaks* did provide Edwards with the occasion to disseminate scientific and objective information on her own terms. Perhaps this prevented her from encroaching too far, both literally and metaphorically, into the male world of mountaineering.

Contemporary reviewers would seem to comply with this thinking; they do not consider Edwards as a mountaineer and place her very firmly into a female ‘novelist’ category. Her writing on the Dolomites, then, is an amalgam of both scholarly and narrative discourse. Therefore, it clearly confronted, or began to confront, Victorian and Edwardian ‘scepticism about a woman’s authority’ and the difficulties women had in writing with ‘recognized authority’, even about her their own experiences. This required a ‘writing strategy that was both modest in tone and presented within a carefully researched and verified framework of facts drawn from already established sources’ (O’Neill 2009, 56).

One reviewer of the second edition of *Untrodden Peaks*, in line with the trend that increasingly accepted efforts such as Edwards’ in the field of mountaineering, science and art, praised Edwards’ work as ‘refreshing’ and

‘charming’, and only criticized the book’s cover (Fig. 4.6); the image was gothic ‘enough to frighten away even the most adventurous tourist from the “Untrodden Peaks”’ (*The Pall Mall Gazette*, no. 7618, August 17, 1889). But the overall success of the book comes from its concentration on an ‘obscure’ corner of Europe, of ‘what would be new to nearly all her readers’ (*ibid.*). It also appeared to satisfy a different goal to the more serious mountaineering texts and guides, for it ‘offers no fewer attractions to the man of science than to the artist and lover of scenery’ (*ibid.*). The unknown, fantastical and dream-like qualities of the Dolomites, evoked by Edwards, seem to have positioned the Dolomites as a stimulating touristic site for the ‘curiosity and enterprise of the tourist who has grown weary of familiar routes’ (*The Pall Mall Gazette*, no. 2637, July 29, 1873).

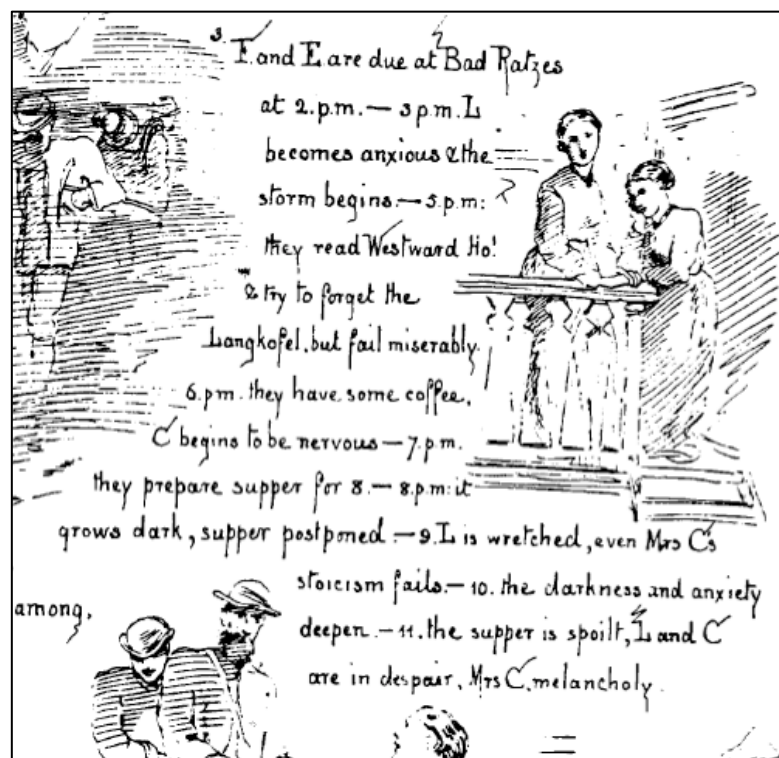


Fig. 4.10 - ‘F and E are due at Bad Ratzen at 2p.m. – L becomes anxious as the storm begins’, in Elizabeth Tuckett’s *Zigzagging Amongst Dolomites* (1871).

With regard to women in the Dolomite Mountains, along with Edwards, should be added Elizabeth Tuckett, the sister of Francis Fox Tuckett (Fig. 4.10).

She produced humorous sketchbooks of her travels with her brother and other 'Some members of the Alpine Club', including *How We Spent the Summer or "A Voyage en Zigzag" in Switzerland and Tyrol, with Some Members of the Alpine Club* (1864), *Beaten Track, or, Pen and Pencil Sketches in Italy* (1866), *Pictures in Tyrol and Elsewhere* (1867), and, for our purposes, *Zigzagging Amongst Dolomites* (1871), published at a similar time to *Untrodden Peaks*. The sketches, like the textual ones of Edwards, are playful and novel, but where Edwards subtly attempts to counter male dominance in the field, Tuckett rather submits to it. They often, for instance, depict the ladies of the group 'anxiously waiting for men in the hostels or offering them a hero's welcome after a successful ascent', which they have not themselves partaken in. Tuckett's sketches suggest a belief that the peaks are not the preserve of the 'passive, weaker female', other pictures confirm this idea by the women's reliance on horses and mules (Colley 2010, 112).

Edwards' gendered approach to travel performance reveals different features of the Dolomite landscape, and becomes a useful device for symbolically challenging and avoiding gender constraints of previous modes of travel writing, and appreciating landscape and geography more generally, during the Silver Age. But her yielding of geographic knowledge is subject to a recourse to traditional, arguably masculine, aesthetic strategies: 'framing, distancing, isolating and emphasizing some senses at the expense of others, representing, allegorically, and using metonymy' (Adler 1989b, 1383). Simon Schama provides an interesting early example of the gendering of the mastery of landscape in the Alps with Henriette d'Angeville, who sought union with Mont Blanc in 1838, anticipating 'the delicious hour when I could lie on his summit' (1995, 497).

Where the Golden Age tended to be the preserve of men, the Silver Age, added to physical mountaineering a new multifaceted experience, blending

sportive, recreational and cultural activities (Herbert 1991). This addition led to a more ethnographic, feminine, and artistic dimension of the Englishness expressed in the Dolomites. *Untrodden Peaks* attempts to break away from the mould, and yet sinks, occasionally, back into rhetoric of older orders of writing about landscape. Edwards fits a classification of an agent of empire, in the Golden Age sense, whilst importantly and ‘simultaneously negotiating respectable femininity’ (Guelke and Morin 2001, 306).

Throughout her book, we have seen how Edwards regularly drew attention to modified viewpoints and perspectives, undermining the traditional authority of what May Louise Pratt calls the “‘Monarch-of-all-I-survey” scene’ (Pratt 2008, 197). By adopting and focusing on the childlike elements of places and people, and the playfulness of the landscape itself, Edwards dismantles the authoritative position attributed to sight, or at least begins to. In following Carter’s insight to Nan Shepherd’s *The Living Mountain*, I similarly see this development as a disruption of ‘the link between vision and power and possession’, whereby Edwards ‘not only undermines the discourse which promote aesthetic and scientific detachment, but also those that promulgate conquest, domination and mastery’ (Carter 2001, 31).

But this is only partly true and more complex than would first appear. In emulation of the men of the imperialistic Golden Age, Edwards’ gaze upon the Dolomite landscape can be additionally associated with the all seeing man, whose imperial eyes looked out and possessed. Pratt provides an alternative and empowering argument in relation to female Victorian travel writers: ‘If the men’s job was to collect and possess everything else, these women travellers sought first and foremost to collect and possess themselves’ (Pratt 2008, 156). W. J. T. Mitchell (1994a) further argues that the picturesque sketching and ‘capturing’ of geographical locations, beyond evoking notions of femininity through associations to emotionalism, ‘orders’ features of landscape, so that the

picturesque may be not only a possessive and masculine modality, but also a potentially 'dark' and imperialistic enterprise in itself.

The Silver Age of mountaineering simultaneously exploited both symbolic and real geography to transform the Dolomites into an English playground, in which tourists could perform old and new practices allowing them to entertain the illusion of living abroad and at home at the same time. Tim Ingold argues that 'through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are part of it' (1993, 155); but there are ways to construct a landscape also by temporarily dwelling in it, with the same transformative consequences. The books taken up here not only encouraged travel to the Dolomites, establishing them as a distinctive must on an ideal touristic itinerary, but they inscribed into the memory of their readers a world 'meaningfully engaged with' (Ingold 1995, 58) – so meaningfully attractive that eventually transformed itself into a zone of prestige in its own right. The Silver Age 'invention' of the Dolomites does not only take place in the external realm of text and pictures; they are created by active engagement with the scenery, a physical enactment of Michel De Certeau's argument that 'History begins at ground level, with footsteps ... The motions of walking are spatial creations. They link sites one to the other' (1985, 129). Edwards' ethnographic approach shows how 'the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of – and testimony to – the loves and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves' (Ingold 1993, 152; Amato 2004; Solnit 2002).

The new and amazing forms of these colossal mountains; their strange colouring; the mystery of their formation; the singularity of their relative positions, each being so near its neighbour, yet in itself so distinct and isolated; the curious fact that they are all so nearly of one height; their very names, so unlike the names of all other mountains, high-sounding, majestic, like relics of a prehistoric tongue – all these sights and facts in sudden combination confuse the imagination, and leave one bewildered

The Silver Age of Mountaineering

at first by the variety and rapidity with which impression after impression has been charged upon the memory. It was therefore almost a sense of relief that, weary with wonder and admiration, we found ourselves approaching the end of the day's journey (Edwards 1873, 49-50).

Edwards here uniquely reveals how English cultural memory is embedded in the scenery, profitably complicating its 'landscape story', and shows how, both spontaneously and through the passage of time, it becomes intrinsic to the natural landscape itself.

Notes

¹ Interestingly, the role of British alpinism is less explored in German accounts (Richardi 2008), which focus more on Austrian alpinism.

² Marco Benedetti, for instance, suggests that the famous 'Tomasson Way' on the difficult South wall of the Marmolada, firstly climbed by the English lady Beatrice Tomasson (1859-1947) and her guides Michele Bettega and Bortolo Zagonel (Reisach 2001) should be named in the future the 'Bettega – Zagonel – Tomasson Way' (Benedetti 2002, 464; Decarli 2006b, 68, 88–89); more in general on women climbers, see Williams 1973.

³ I use the term 'Silver Age' slightly differently from some. Clark, for instance, sees the Silver Age 'being marked by the development of guideless climbing, by the climbing of old mountains by new routes, by climbing in ranges beyond the Alps, by the development of climbing in Britain, and by the increase of mountaineering among women' (Clark 1953, 61; Ring 2000, 190; Williams 1973). I concur with this view but apply the term in an alternative way by referring it instead to styles of 'being in' and appreciating the Dolomites rather than to its period or duration; these styles refer to different places (British crags and Dolomites, for instance), beyond the Western and Swiss Alps.

⁴ Stranded in an unfriendly Pisa, Shelley bluntly wrote: 'Not that I much wish to be in England if I could but import a cargo of friends and books from that island here' (Shelley 1980, 136–137); Italy would be at its best if one could substitute the Italians with a bunch of English friends (Cazzato 2012, 198).

⁵ It is not surprising that the recent discovery of Stephen in geography studies has been promoted by scholars sensitive to Merleau Ponty and his phenomenological approach to landscape as a form of embodiment (Morrison 2009). That in staging his defence of mountaineering Stephen is reacting quite explicitly to Ruskin is correct; but the differences between the two have been perhaps exaggerated (Colley 2009). In fact, Stephen regrets that mountaineers lack the ability to express with words mountain beauty ('Yet most humble writers will feel that if they try to imitate Mr. Ruskin's

eloquence they will pay the penalty of becoming ridiculous', Stephen 1871, 268), but they are in a better the position to appreciate it through their privileged vantage points.

⁶ Stephen would later extend this image as a cardinal rule for excellent writing in his Ruskin obituary: 'The cardinal virtue of a good style is that every sentence should be alive to its fingers' ends' (Stephen 1900, 240).

⁷ The new 'way of seeing' promoted by alpinists was openly disregarded in one of his Oxford lectures: 'Believe me, gentlemen, your power of seeing mountains cannot be developed either by your vanity, your curiosity, or your love of muscular exercise. It depends on the cultivation of the instrument of sight itself, and of the sense that causes it' (Ruskin 1903, 26: 103).

⁸ Here is an eloquent example of the prose the 'humble writers' of Alpine literature tried anxiously to emulate: 'It may make no difference to some men whether a natural object be large or small, whether it be strong or feeble. But loveliness of colour, perfectness of form, endlessness of change, wonderfulness of structure, are precious to all undiseased human minds; and the superiority of the mountains in all these things to the lowland is, I repeat, as measurable as the richness of a painted window matched with a white one, or the wealth of a museum compared with that of a simply furnished chamber. They seem to have been built for the human race, as at once their schools and cathedrals; full of treasures of illuminated manuscript for the scholar, kindly in simple lessons to the worker, quiet in pale cloisters for the thinker, glorious in holiness for the worshipper. And of these great cathedrals of the earth, with their gates of rock, pavements of cloud, choirs of stream and stone, altars of snow, and vaults of purple traversed by the continual stars' (Ruskin 1903, 6: 425).

⁹ Her Egyptology lectures were collected in the work *Pharaohs, Fellahs, and Explorers* (Edwards 1891). She gained honorary degrees from several colleges in America, as well as being granted a civil pension from the British government for the services to the nation through her Egyptology work. Her fortune gained as 'the most learned woman in the world' allowed her to bequeath money to University College London, establishing the first English chair in Egyptology (O'Neill 2009).

¹⁰ Later editions of *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys* describe how better roads and the introduction of rail links facilitate improved travelling conditions for the British tourist.

¹¹ 'The Children's Hour' provides an interesting understanding of 'where do all the toys come from ... actually from one of the very loveliest Tyrolese valleys', in *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, no. 7189, October 24, 1885.

¹² This would achieve the third level of Collins' (2004) symbolic recirculation; an internal conversation that implies the potency of the imagery and symbolism invested in British mountaineers by their Dolomite guides.

¹³ Stephen mainly explored the Pale di San Martino group and the Primiero Dolomites in eastern Trentino and achieved a number of 'firsts'. In 1869 Leslie Stephen climbed from Primiero to Passo di Ball, in the heart of the Pale di San Martino group, crossing the pass named in honour of John Ball to the summit of the Cima di Ball (2802m), also named in his honour, an important mountain in the central sector of Pale di San Martino (Neate 1980).



CHAPTER 5

Titian Country

Sketching about Venice in a gondola a year before the time of which I write, I used to be ever looking towards the faint blue peaks beyond Murano.

— Amelia B. Edwards

This chapter focuses on Josiah Gilbert's *Cadore, or Titian's Country* (1869), the book that inextricably linked, for British travellers, the Dolomite Mountains with the name of Titian. It will revolve around three points. Firstly, I discuss how the link between the Dolomites and Titian emerged as a symbolic gaze cast from Venice. Secondly, I show how that gaze was negotiated between visual and pictorial landscapes, through Gilbert's personal exploitation of the cult of Titian. Thirdly, I argue that Gilbert transformed that cult into a series of itineraries, tracing a Dolomite 'Petit Tour' in Cadore, which, thanks to Gilbert's book, came to be known in England as Titian's Country. The overall goal of the chapter is to illustrate how Gilbert's model can help understanding cultural landscape as web of hybridized geographical discourses (Collins 2004; Cosgrove 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels 1997; Matless 1998).

The Highlands of Venice

In 1866, Henry Ecroyd wrote a long article on George Augustus Sala's *Temple Bar – A London Magazine for Town and Country Readers* entitled 'The Highlands of Venetia' (1866 and 1867), with the intention to promote a charming 'Petit Tour' in the hills surrounding Verona, Padova and Vicenza – without, however, mentioning the Dolomites, identified as a background of a scenery whose horizon is silhouetted by the 'Venetian Alps'. To include in that horizon the Dolomites we need to recall the 'romantic' spirit of William Adam's description of Matlock amply quoted in the conclusion of Chapter 1. That passage presupposes a familiarity with the wild British landscape that Britons started exploring from the eighteenth century as a local complement to the most beloved sceneries associated to the Grand Tour, and with increasing frequency during the Napoleonic era, when the voyage to the Continent was made arduous because of the wars (Gaskill 2004; Hooper 2002; Buzard 2002, 41–43; Darby 2000, 79–82; Korte 2000, 66–81). New fascinations with the Celtic fringe of Great Britain, with the legends of Ossian and his father Fingal, with the Scottish Highlands and their barren landscapes held sway. British tourists were thus brought to discover in their own country that 'romantic' quality they had learned to appreciate abroad from Rosa's art and his 'Alpine' sceneries: 'Britain's unimproved mountainous Celtic fringe supplied appropriately miniaturized Alpine landscapes for the practice of the Picturesque' (Darby 2000, 79). A 'Home Tour' started to join the 'Grand Tour' as an interactive ground for generating new topographic memories.

The encounter between these two travel practices is often presented as a clash between two different mentalities. James Buzard, for example, seems to portray them as mutually exclusive: 'Whereas the Continental Grand Tourist before this period had favoured fertile, gentle landscapes, the Ossianic pilgrims were drawn to mist, mountains, and waterfalls, and their new enthusiasm was

beginning to be shared by travellers to other Celtic fringe regions of Britain, such as North Wales, as well as by travellers through Switzerland' (Buzard 2002, 43). Nothing, for instance, would appear more incompatible than the cosmopolitan seascape of Venice and the barren landscape of the Scottish Highlands; and yet a closer look to the sources would suggest differently. It appears more profitable, therefore, to consider Home Tour and Grand Tour as matrices producing complementary rather than competing memories. The mutual interplay of these two matrices allowed British tourists to configure the Dolomites as a new picturesque playground in which the Ossian could ideally meet Titian.

The Dolomites are not immediately visible from the main road that from the Brenner brought down tourists to Venice. They are clearly visible, however, from Venice itself – from the portion of the Lagoon leading to Murano, Burano and Torcello. However, no Grand Tourist, swarming about the famous canals of the Most Serene Republic ('Serenissima'), has left us with a detailed description of them; no souvenir has come down to us from that period. That mountainous background was simply invisible to their eyes; it was neither part of the picture nor part of the established iconography of the Venetian landscape. In the numerous and most canonical views of the city, from Canaletto to Turner, these 'Venetian mountains' are invariably absent. They appeared confused in a shroud of mist or concealed behind an urban gaze that privileged the silhouettes of palaces, loggias, chimneys, towers or bridges reflecting themselves on the water rolling over the city. One of the contributions of this chapter is to unravel the memories of a scenery without tangible souvenirs; a scenery whose ingredients were there, but that needed to become part of a distinct iconography before being remembered and cherished as heritage.

The creation of this iconography remained somehow an unfinished work; but a work that bore from its onset a clear mark of Englishness. Byron noticed

them – ‘a sea | of glory streams along the Alpine height | of blue Friuli’s mountains’ and ‘but still | yon sunny sea heaves brightly, and remains | roll’d o’er the peak of the far Rhætian hill’ (Canto IV 27-28); Ruskin drew them – ‘The peak represented is one of the greatest Tyrolese Alps, which shows itself from Venice behind an opening in the chain, and is their culminating point’ (Ruskin, 4: 267). However, we have to wait for Amelia B. Edwards to conceive a view that could instil the desire for a journey – ‘Sketching about Venice in a gondola a year before the time of which I write, I used to be ever looking towards the faint blue peaks beyond Murano’ and ‘to dream in a vague way of those mystic mountains beyond Verona which we knew of, somewhat indefinitely, as the Dolomites’ (Edwards 1873, 4–5). It is a view that will remain even in the years to come somehow indefinite.

The haziness of this view chimes with the haziness of the terminology: ‘Friuli’s mountains’, ‘Rhætian hill’, ‘Tyrolese Alps’, ‘mystic mountains’, ‘Venetian mountains’, ‘Venetian Alps’, as still Josiah Gilbert, author of the first authoritative guide that described them at length, used to call them. This distant scenery, covered in blue (‘blue peaks’), was without name; and because of its namelessness, literally out of view. The tasks of giving a name to these mountains, of putting them on a map, of making them visible, of populating them with a series of sights of interest, of promoting them as set of milestones linked through well-designed itineraries, of inserting them in a storyline that could be remembered and transmitted to future generations took place within that particular culture of travel that Gilbert, Ball and Edwards epitomized.

Within that culture, which witnessed the development of the first modern tourist industry, the rugged scenery in the background of Venice emerged visually as an anti-tourist destination par excellence – a new landscape fully located within the geographical boundaries of Italy that would allow the ‘tourist’ to act as a ‘traveller’ without leaving the continent (Buzard 1993b). One of the

main producers of that landscape – as we saw in the second chapter – was John Murray III, in his 1837 acclaimed *Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany*; but its visual and to some extent visionary attachment to Venice and the noble appeal of its historical, cultural and natural heritage is the product of a subsequent generation of British travellers, who tried, like several other fellow countrymen, to differentiate themselves from the new image of the tourist with which Murray, Cook, Bradshaw and Baedeker were threatening to destroy the old and great tradition of the ‘art of travel’ (Adler 1989b).

The existing legal, economic and customary bonds linking Venice historically to its distant rocky countryside could easily offer a fertile ground for exemplifying what Kenneth Olwig called the ‘substantive nature of landscape’, as ‘a region, the prospect of a country’; but its alternative ‘ephemeral’ meaning, as ‘a picture, an extent of space, with the various objects in it’, reveals in fact a British matrix (Olwig 1996). Seeing those ‘objects’ as part of a ‘picture’ cast from the Lagoon required in fact a series of visual practices and performances that the Venetians did not experience – or if they did, they did not exploit their scenic potential for altering or enhancing their city’s iconography. If England, and later America, had learned from Venice how to blur the ‘substantive nature’ of their countryside through a skilful appropriation of the Palladian model (Cosgrove 1993), Venice was now offered the opportunity to learn from England how to incorporate a picturesque layer of ‘romantic rocks’ in the symbolic outlook of its *terraferma*.

If the script was Italian, the procedure had become, by then, utterly British. This procedure enacted on the Venetian landscape the symbolic alterations of the scenery that two centuries before the English had applied on their own countryside following the classical model of the Arcadian pastures depicted by Bellini, Giorgione and Titian:

Titian Country

The landscape is constructed in a series of low undulations and rounded hill forms differently highlighted or in shadow. In the background runs the line of the Alps. The varying tones give both strong recession from the picture plane and in their horizontality across the picture emphasise the mood of calm unity between human feeling and the world of nature. Space at rest and the intensity of light are the technical means for rendering beauty and holiness which is the pictorial equivalent of *grazia*: a beauty not susceptible to written rules but emerging from the celestial love which infuses all things (Cosgrove 1984, 123).

But if in Bellini's landscapes – here synthetically rehearsed by Denis Cosgrove – the generic 'line of the Alps' was running in the background of a scene permeated with classical remembrances, its transformation into a tangible and identifiable chain of mountains modified that line and that landscape into a picturesque scenery. Beyond the amiable belt of Palladian villas, strewn over the rural swathes around Venice, Verona and Vicenza, the 'Venetian Highlands' came to represent the new rugged fringe of the maritime city. Victorian visitors of Venice became accustomed to stretch their gaze far beyond the orderly Palladian landscape into the picturesque country of Titian.

After the publication of Josiah Gilbert's *Cadore, or Titian's Country* (1869), as we will see, the Dolomites became part of the Venetian iconography, fostering a 'petit tour' in the Highlands of Venice to pay homage to the birthplace of the great painter. John Ruskin and Anna Jameson had paved the way (Colley 2010, 167–168; Ozturk 2010; Johnston 1994; Schulz 1982). Ruskin, in one of his famous 'word-paintings' (Landow 1971, 232–236; but see here Chapter 1), depicted the background of Venice in 1851, a letter to his father, later included in *The Stones of Venice*, as the first view he saw approaching the city by water:

at what seemed its northern extremity, the hills of Arqua rose in a dark cluster of purple pyramids, balanced on the bright mirage of the lagoon; two or three smooth surges of inferior hill extended themselves about

their roots, and beyond these, beginning with the craggy peaks above Vicenza, the chain of the Alps girded the whole horizon to the north – a wall of jagged blue, here and there showing through its clefts a wilderness of misty precipices, fading far back into the recesses of Cadore, and itself rising and breaking away eastward, where the sun struck opposite upon its snow, into mighty fragments of peaked light, standing up behind the barred clouds of evening, one after another, countless, the crown of the Adrian Sea, until the eye turned back from pursuing them, to rest upon the nearer burning of the campaniles of Murano, and on the great city, where it magnified itself along the waves, as the quick silent pacing of the gondola drew nearer and nearer (Ruskin 1955, 124–125; 1903, 10: 5).¹

The ‘misty precipices, fading back into the recesses of Cadore’, seen from a ‘gondola’, clearly impressed Amelia Edwards, who transformed them into the ‘mystic mountains beyond Verona’ that she sketched ‘from a gondola’ near Murano (Edwards 1873, 5).

Jameson, instead, lingered profusely on the view Titian would have caught from his garden in Venice, distinguishing clearly between a watery foreground (the Lagoon), a pastoral middle ground (the mainland and the Euganean hills) and a rugged background (the Friuli Alps):

He looked over the wide canal, which is the thoroughfare between the city of Venice and the Island of Murano; in front the two smaller islands of San Cristoforo and San Michele; and beyond them Murano, rising on the right, with all its domes and campanili, like another Venice. Far off extended the level line of the mainland, and, in the distance, the towering chain of the Friuli Alps, sublime, half defined, with jagged snow-peaks soaring against the sky; and more to the left, the Euganean hills, Petrarch’s home, melting, like visions, into golden light ... More glorious combinations of sea, mountain, shore, there may be – I cannot tell; *like it*, is nothing that I have ever beheld or imagined (Jameson 1846, 42–43).

The 'glorious combination' of foreground, middle ground and background is here 'melting', like a vision of an expanded scenery 'into the golden light' of Venice – a vision ready to be exploited by British travellers.

Writing in the pages of the *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, Laurence Oliphant (1829-1888) added to this view a further picturesque component: 'From the garden of Titian, yet wildly luxuriant, we looked up to Cadore, – to splintered, fantastic pinnacles, whose very names were then unknown to us' (Oliphant 1888, 185); Leader Scott (alias Lucy Emily Baxter, 1837-1902), would transform this view into a detailed itinerary following the footpath of Titian himself:

He sat musing in his garden on summer evenings the memories of things that had vanished were more potent than the joys which were left. His gaze turned northward, where, far, far away, peaked Antelao shot its spires up into the sky like a white phantom above the mists of the lagoons, and the ghostlike points seemed fingers beckoning him back to the home of his youth. Year after year had he answered their call ... We will follow in spirit the course of his pilgrimage (Scott 1893, 29).

Although difficult to see even in clearest summer days, the Antelao ('It is possible, however, as we know, to see the Antelao from Venice on such a clear day as befalls about a dozen times in the course of a summer', Edwards 1873, 19) became a symbolic signpost indelibly placed in both Titian's and Venice's backgrounds, to the point that its view, once arrived in the proximity of Cadore, spurred in the mind of travellers the pleasure of a familiar scenery – 'We know at once that yonder vague and shadowy mass which soars beyond our sight and seems to gather up the slopes of the valley as a robe, can be none other than the Antelao. A grand, but a momentary sight!' (*ibid.*, 43). Frances Elliot (1820-1898), who arrived to the Dolomites coming from the north, could not forbear to imagine its view from Venice: 'Antalao (sic), with its magnificent pinnacles

blazing with magic colours in the morning sun, seemed to me but a great landmark pointing to the wonder-land behind ... all reminded me of “bits” by Titian’ (Elliot 1870, 356).

The quotations could continue. But what is interesting to remark here is that we would hardly find such a panoramic view of Venice – from the Lagoon to the Dolomites – in the most current tourist handbooks of the time. Both Murray and Cook mentioned the Dolomites as seen from Tyrol, and in their description of Venice they invariably omit any reference to them. Sir Francis Palgrave, author of the rightly acclaimed *Murray’s Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy*, refers his readers to Anna Jameson’s essay on ‘The House of Titian’, but without making any allusion to the picturesque view one could see from its garden (Palgrave 1843, 362). Members of the Alpine Club, notably John Ball (1818-1889), first president and compiler of the first authoritative *Guide to the Eastern Alps* (1868), mention only views of Venice cast from the mountains, but never of the mountains from Venice itself (Ball 1868, 434, 508, 572). The Alpine scenery viewed from Venice clearly related to a different matrix of topographic memory, to different travel practices, and different symbols neither linked to standard tourism nor to standard mountaineering.

The view on the Venetian Highlands – improbable as it was in its paradoxical combination of mountains and sea – flourished, instead, in the extemporary reveries on the maritime city portrayed in magazines or in travel books written as an alternative to the most popular guides. It was a view destined to succumb together with a ‘way of seeing’, which tried to rescue patterns of travel that the modern tourist industry had considered already bygone. A remarkable example, together with the bestsellers by Edwards and Gilbert and Churchill (see Chapter 4), is the guidebook written by Revd. Alexander Robertson, Ruskin’s friend and Presbyterian chaplain at Venice, towards the end of the century (Wheeler 1999, 94). In his *Through the Dolomites from Venice to Toblach* (1896), Robertson

offers his readers with *A Practical, Historical, and Descriptive Guide-Book to the Scotland of Italy*.



Fig. 5.1 - William Logsdail (1859-1944), *The Dolomites, Seen from Venice*, in Robertson 1896, frontispiece.

Robertson's book opens with an illustration by William Logsdail (1859-1944, see Marshall 2004), especially prepared for his book, portraying the view of *The Dolomites Seen from Venice* over the lagoon of Murano (Fig. 5.1); here is how this view is transformed into an itinerary:

Titian's custom of going in the summer-time from heated Venice to the cool Dolomite Mountains – The Scotland of Italy – that stand so invitingly within sight of the city, is one that Venetians practised long before the painter's day, and which they have kept up ever since. Our fellow-countrymen who live in Venice have not been slow in learning the same habit; whilst English and American travellers, in annually increasing numbers, are learning to prefer an invigorating drive 'Through the

Dolomites', from Venice to Toblach, to a hot, dusty, railway journey to Milan (Robertson 1896, vii).

Three kinds of people are mentioned here – the Venetians, the British who decided to make of Venice their permanent residence, and the English and American travellers to Italy, who would prefer, to the main road through Milan and Switzerland, the rather unfrequented route through the Dolomites for their journey back home. The guidebook is intended for these – foreign travellers who wanted to emulate the old Venetian custom of spending a short summer holiday in the Highlands of Venice, which 'because of its character and that of its people, and the legendary and historic romance that surrounds them', Robertson calls 'The Scotland of Italy' (*ibid.*).

Why should travellers choose this route over others? What goods were they promised to find there that they could not find elsewhere? What was making it so attractive? And why, more importantly, a new practical guide was needed? Distinct from the one through Switzerland, the route through the Dolomites is promoted here as an ancient one; a route that would bring tourists through 'those parts of it, traversed by the great Piave and Boite Valleys, which are to-day, what they have been for centuries, the grand natural highway "Through the Dolomites"' (*ibid.*). Along this road, tourists would find 'scenes of natural beauty and historic interest' (*ibid.*, viii); for, 'unlike ordinary country towns and villages, those of the Dolomites are all historic places, each with its archives well stored with ancient documents – some of which date back nearly a thousand years' (*ibid.*). Nature and history, in short, packaged in one itinerary from Venice to its Highlands – 'The Scotland of Italy'.

What Robertson does in promoting this new scenery as an old one is unravelling for his Anglo-American tourists a heritage filled with old and new ingredients shared by both Italian and British inhabitants of Venice – the city, as Mrs Oliphant said, whose 'interest ... is inexhaustible, and its fascination

perennial', but a city, also, that had, by then, already lost part of its inexplicable magnetism: 'Rome is not what it was; neither is Venice; though Venice has not been "restored" out of recognition, as Rome has been' (Oliphant 1888, 185). To seize and perpetuate its 'incommunicable charm', Robertson fused in his itinerary two 'ways of seeing' – the 'historical' scenery of Venice and the 'legendary' scenery of Scotland – in an indissoluble union of landscape art and medieval romance, in which the classical memory of the Venetian Grand Tour could overlap with the picturesque memory of the Romantic voyage to the Scottish Highlands and Islands (Buzard 2002, 43–45). Only a British gaze, forged through the readings of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott could have operated that union.

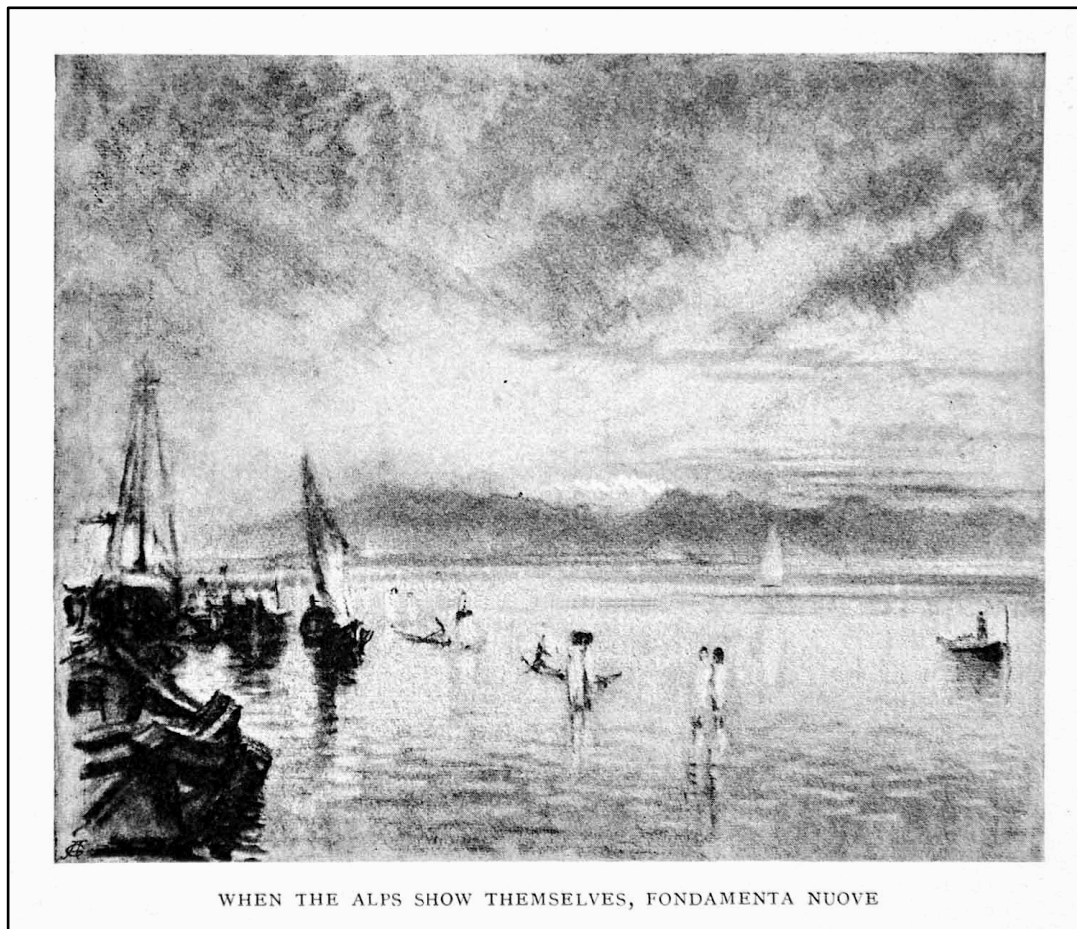


Fig. 5.2 - Joseph Pennell (1859-1944), *When the Alps show Themselves, Fondamenta Nuove*, in Crawford 1905, 2: 300.²

It is unsurprising, after what we have discussed so far, to find Logsdail's picture in a travel book, which shares with that image the same outlook – from Venice to Toblach. Far more surprising, however, is finding that view exploited in a book entirely dedicated to Venice, in which the Dolomites as such are never mentioned. We find it in Francis Marion Crawford's *Salve Venetia: Gleanings from Venetian History* (1905, 2: 300), illustrated by Joseph Pennell (1857-1926), already known for having exercised his pen and pencil in the Alps, Dolomites included (see Chapter 3). The evocative title of the plate is *When the Alps show Themselves, Fondamenta Nuove* (Fig. 5.2), and nothing in the chapter that houses it ('The Last Magistrates') explains the inclusion of such an image; few pages further, the same subject is repeated also in a drawing – here Venice, despite the gondolas, looks almost like a view of Luzern or Geneva (Fig. 5.3).

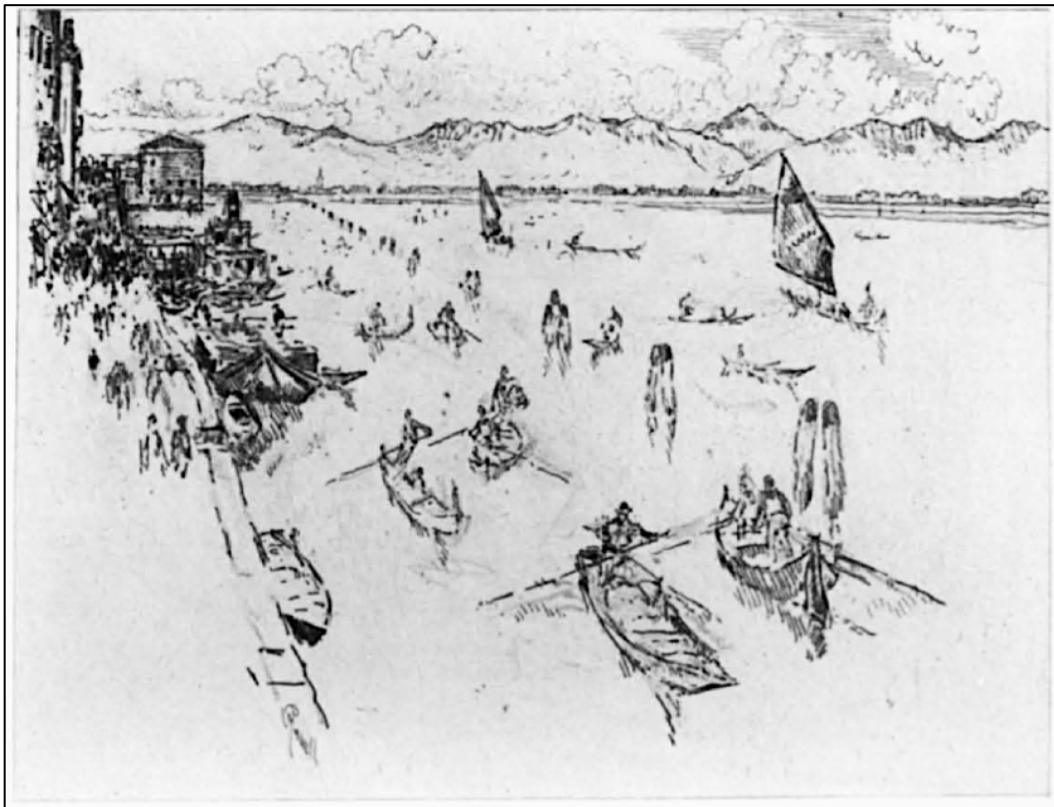


Fig. 5.3 - Joseph Pennell (1859-1944), *Fondamente (sic) Nuove*, in Crawford 1905, 2: 313.

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The general matrix, however, of these views is John Ruskin – or, better, Ruskin exploited and popularized by Josiah Gilbert: ‘in a delicately pencil outline by Mr. Ruskin ... the entire base of the [Dolomite] range is swathed in mist. The watchman of the Campanile of St. Mark will tell you that the most favourable time is the very earliest dawn; and residents in Venice, that winter is the only season when they are seen for any length of time together. I myself can testify to almost a dozen ineffectual ascents of the Campanile, and only two brief visions from other spots of their far off beauty’ (1869, 22-23). Given the absence of any boat in Ruskin’s drawing, here reproduced by Gilbert, Venice disappears, and ‘the Alps show themselves’ (Fig. 5.4).

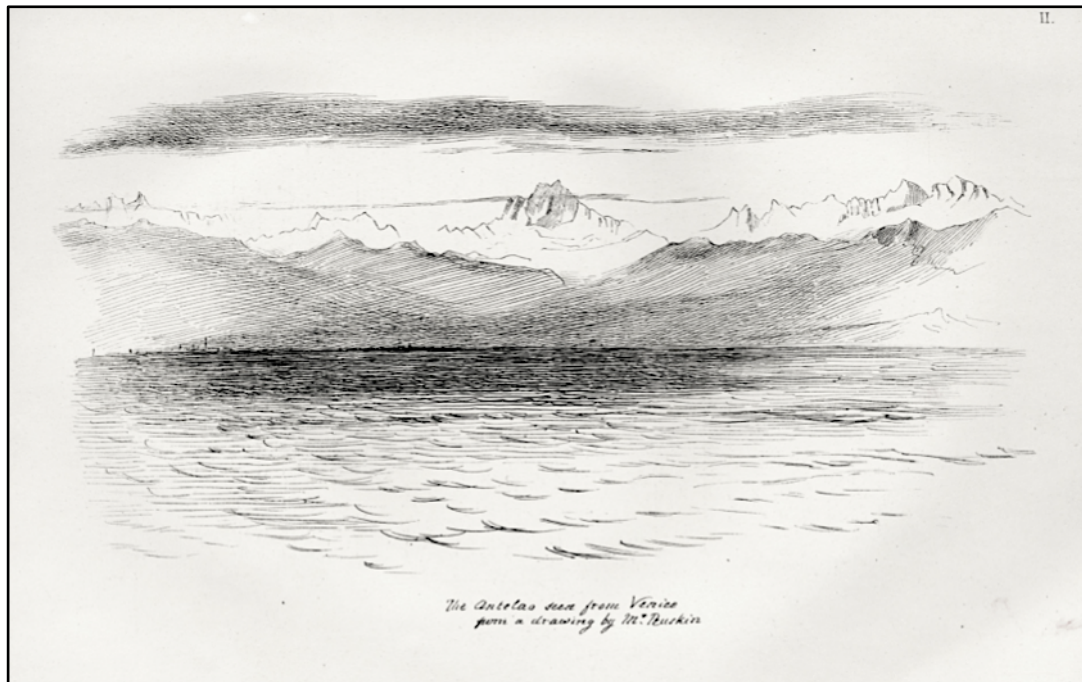


Fig. 5.4 – Josiah Gilbert, *The Antelao seen from Venice, from a drawing by Mr Ruskin*, 1869, wood engraving, in Gilbert 1869.

The Cult of Titian

During the nineteenth century, the most authoritative biography of Titian was written and printed in England, as a joint effort of the art connoisseurs Joseph Archer Crowe (1825-1896, see Graham 2004) and Giovanni Battista

Cavalcaselle (1819-1897) – *Titian: His Life and Times, with some Account of his Family, Chiefly from New and Unpublished Sources* (Cavalcaselle and Crowe 1877; Levi 1982; Dell’Acqua 1977; Sutton 1985; Kleinbauer 1971, 44). The monograph, published by John Murray, was preceded by a more comprehensive work on early Renaissance painting in Northern Italy – *A History of Painting in North Italy: Venice, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Ferrara, Milan, Friuli, Brescia, from the Fourteenth to the Sixteenth Century* (Cavalcaselle and Crowe 1871) – centred, more or less, on the ancient territories of the Venetian Republic. This suffices to gain an image on the cult of Titian and Venetian art in England during the second half of the century (Redford 1996).

Crowe and Cavalcaselle’s art books launched a new style in art criticism, based on aesthetic comprehension and painterly execution, and keen to supply its outcomes with accurate documentary evidence, with a particular attention to the biography of the artist (Tommasi 1998; Levi 1982; Dell’Acqua 1977). That the specialism of their approach could have resulted indigestible for common readers is made evident by an appeal to Crowe and Cavalcaselle from publisher John Murray to fashion their descriptions of Italian painters in a ‘more amusing’ way, finding them ‘terribly dry’ (Sutton 1985, 114; Graham 2004). Murray’s request was motivated by marketing reasons; art books were supposed to teach but also entertain, if not even performing the function of a travel book, in the manner of Anna Jameson (Lew 1996; Johnston 1994) and John Ruskin, who later in his career was not adverse to making his own work useful for travellers (Siegel 2000, 180–186, 322; Bradley 1987, 20).³

No one denies that in promoting and spreading the cult of Titian during the Victorian era John Ruskin and Anna Jameson played a seminal role (Johnston 1994; Thomas 2004, 71–78; Cosgrove 1982; Hanley and Sdegno 2010). Following recent works that stress Ruskin’s self-conscious modernity (Siegel 2000, vii–xxiv, 183–184; Birch 1999), David Wayne Thomas points out that the

endorsement of Venice and Venetian art was not for Ruskin a backward-looking project – ‘as liberal critics, such as Leslie Stephen and John Morley’ would have criticised it (Thomas 2004, 50) – but a modern and even progressive assertion that beheld an instructive anxiety towards self-agency and self-fashioning: ‘Ruskin saw in Venice – in its grandeur and in its decline – an image ... of his own conflicted feelings about individuality and agency’ (*ibid.*).

Less self-conscious, but modern nevertheless, Josiah Gilbert harnessed the cult of Titian in a different way, closely connected to his promotion of the Dolomite Mountains as Titian’s Country (1869). If for Ruskin the mythical aura surrounding Titian’s birthplace in Pieve di Cadore blended with the ‘misty precipices’ seen from his beloved Venice; for Gilbert, his familiarity with those ‘precipices’, acquired over years of travel, made Venice almost disappear. Gilbert’s inflection of the cult of Titian reverses, in fact, Ruskin’s perspective, paying to the Dolomite Mountains the same obsessive attention that Ruskin was paying to the Stones of Venice. It is not surprising, therefore, to see Gilbert taking issue with Ruskin gazing at the Alps from the house of Titian (Fig. 5.13) in the Fondamenta Nuove:

Titian, looking out of his window, saw the sea, and Murano with its houses, and lifted up above them his native mountain, and it marked it down to fill a corner of his picture. There it might have remained unrecognised, had not Mr. Ruskin, in his latter days, copied that portion of the old print, and given his own careful drawing of the mountain, to illustrate a subtle argument, though still unaware, apparently, of the special interest it had in Titian’s eyes, since he only speaks of it as ‘one of the greater Tyrolese Alps’, a somewhat erroneous description (Gilbert 1869, 20-21).

What Ruskin saw on paper, Gilbert knew on the ground of his first experience. The episode derives from one of Ruskin’s essays mostly read by mountaineers,

'On Mountain Beauty'; his 'error', in Gilbert's eyes, was as geographical as cultural. Not knowing that the mountains Ruskin saw from Venice were not the Tyrolese Alps but the Dolomites could in fact attract the interest only of a mountaineer or mountain lover (see Chapter 4). And yet, the argument of Gilbert's *Cadore* revolves entirely in acknowledging, through a method of careful comparison, the presence in Titian's backgrounds of distinct Dolomite peaks.

Today, Titian is not immediately associated with landscape art, as Claude Lorrain, Poussin, Rosa, or Turner might be; nor analyses of his art feature normally in geography. Scholars interested in the understanding of landscape, be they geographers and art historians, have seldom employed Titian's art to unravel clues for a better understanding of landscape representation. Looking at Titian's backgrounds, instead, Gilbert argues:

Landscape backgrounds to his pictures are, as all his admirers know, more frequent than any other; and they reveal not only the close observer, but the first great sympathiser with the poetic side of natural scenery, – the first, or the nearly first, who breathed soul into landscape art. Before him, and by his early contemporaries, we find scenery treated chiefly in its forms alone, and lifeless under the broad glare of day (Gilbert 1869, 32).

In affirming Titian's significance as a landscape painter, Gilbert brings his backgrounds to the foreground; the main subject becomes less important than the recognition of topographic features in the represented landscape.

However, already in 1811, Turner himself, then Professor of Perspective at the Royal Academy, gave a lecture entitled 'Backgrounds, Introduction of Architecture and Landscape' in which he promoted the 'elevation of landscape painting to the same level of acclaim that was normally reserved for history painting' (Ziff 1963, 130–131).

Turner went on to suggest that ‘the highest honour that landscape has as yet, she received from the hands of Titian’ (Ziff 1963, 135). Titian’s backgrounds give meaning to the core subject, through light, shade and presence, acting as a connecting agent to the foreground of the picture: ‘Backgrounds ... whose merit deserves a better title’, should be ‘admitted as part of the picture ... For History either disgraces herself by being always in debt to such aids, ... or considers it so subordinate that its situation might be occupied by any other form equally well’ (*ibid.*). For Gilbert, the importance of Titian for landscape painting should be qualified more pertinently in the way in which he rendered the effects of nature – mountains included:

the landscape is seldom itself the subject; but he showed how worthy it was of such treatment, by the way in which he dealt with it – by his perception of the majesty of mountains, the moving magnificence of clouds, the pensive beauty of twilight, the fleeting changes of sunshine and shade, and the glory of sunset. Is it needful to point out what pathos there is in all this? Most certainly it was the predominating sentiment he found in Nature (Gilbert 1869, 305).

Whether or not we believe in Turner and Gilbert’s praise of Titian as a landscape painter is deserved is beside the point. What is important is that Gilbert makes use of specific examples from Titian’s art and draws our attention to their Dolomitic backgrounds, developing a practice of mapping art through the lens of real landscapes as well as providing his readers with artistic milestones on an itinerary of physical engagement within the actual territory.

There are a number of examples within *Cadore* in which Gilbert makes explicit use of Titian in his illustrations of specific Dolomite Mountains, such as, for instance, Monte Marmarolo, ‘so remarkable in clear weather from [Titian’s] house’ (Fig. 5.12):

the people of Cadore not only claim it as Titian's mountain, but as the original of that introduced in the background of the *Presentation of the Virgin*. It has already been suggested, that the very similar mountain in the *Adoration of the Magi* at Belluno, is the Marmarolo as first seen soon after leaving the city. [Its] great horn, or pyramid ... seems to have chiefly impressed him (Gilbert 1869, 118).



Fig. 5.5 - Titian, *Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Temple*, 1534-38, detail, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice.

While Gilbert insists to see, in *The Presentation of the Virgin* (Fig. 5.5; Rosand 1976) and *The Adoration of the Magi*, features the Marmarolo, in *Peter Martyr* the painter would have depicted the Antelao, the Dolomite mountain that may have been observed and sketched by Titian also from Venice itself. Gilbert explains how 'the thick haze of the Venetian plain' often obscures the view of the Dolomites from Venice; with the clouds of the Adriatic driving up against

them, rolling about their summits, the prospect can be ‘baffling to the observer’ (*ibid.*, 22). Nonetheless, Gilbert testifies to his reader that, after a dozen unsuccessful ascents of the Campanile of St Mark’s, the Antelao, ‘though cloud tormented, showed its unmistakable form for a moment above the gap in the Ceneda hills, which certifies its identity’ (*ibid.*, 23).



Fig. 5.6 - Titian, *The Aldobrandini Madonna* (1532), National Gallery, London.

In searching out lesser-known works by Titian, or works claimed by locals to be by Titian, situated in the ‘nooks and corners’ of the region in the churches of cut-off mountain communities, Gilbert proffers his criticism and judgement on the Titians he finds. Of an altarpiece in the church of Candide, for instance, he states that if it is a ‘copy [the] design at least is by Titian [as] the introduction in the background of an evening sky, cut by two mountain forms, is to me strong evidence, so characteristic is its simple poetry’ (*ibid.*, 92). Gilbert’s readership may have been more familiar, however, with the many Titian’s artworks housed in the National Gallery. Quoting Ruskin, who finds the ‘intense blues’ of Titian’s mountains emerging from his native landscape, Gilbert’s maintained ‘that Titian,

for nature, “always betook himself to the glens and forests of Cadore” (*ibid.*, 35). What Gilbert calls *Madonna and St. Catherine*, in the National Gallery (Fig. 5.6), provides an example of how such an ‘actual scene occurs’ in his ‘journey’ through the Dolomites (*ibid.*, 59).



Fig. 5.7 - Gilbert's sketch of the Belluno landscape that 'inspired' the background landscape of Titian's *Madonna* (Fig. 5.6), in Gilbert 1896.

Gilbert guides his readers into the region of Belluno: 'Thus it is not so much for the pictures that he painted as for the pictures that he saw, that we must visit Belluno country – those everlasting pictures of mountain, hill and vale' (*ibid.*, 58). In the evidence he provides for the direct link between the landscape itself and Titian's art, he states:

Yet, curiously, it must have been from near this very spot, probably from the opposite high bank of the Ardo, not far from the village of Caverzano, and within easy walk from Belluno, that [Titian] took the mountain forms, and noted the sublime effect upon them of evening light, introduced in the already quoted *Madonna and St. Catherine* of the National Gallery. The lines of hills and mountain are identical with a record in my sketch-book, and the sharp-pointed hill, almost lost in the

rays, is one of the most familiar features in the neighbourhood of Belluno. In this case, too, both distance and foreground, the later composed of undulating wooded hills, agree to the actual scene (*ibid.*, 59).

Suggestions that this work was painted by Titian when in Spain and that it represented a Spanish landscape are quickly 'refuted by this identification' and Gilbert includes his sketch as supporting evidence (Fig. 5.7).

Further inclusions of many more of his own sketches of the landscape are primarily used for substantiating his argument that Titian's landscapes are exclusively identified with the locality of Cadore. Likewise, 'in the Duke of Devonshire's grand picture, called St. John in the Wilderness, one of the few proper landscapes of Titian, all his skill and in light and shade over an expanse of country is admirably shown, and used to bring out the poetry of the white mountain crags in the distance' (*ibid.*, 36). But Gilbert, aiming for geographic specificity, argues that this background could well be the 'picturesque range in the Val di Mel, presently noticed', and that the steeped town in front of them is potentially Belluno, yet 'the Ceneda country' is, for this painting, 'the more likely scene' (*ibid.*).

Through this engagement with Titian's art, Gilbert proposes Cadore as the 'cradle of landscape art', and its river Piave, leading to Venice, becomes in his writing the geographic and symbolic pathway that propelled Venetian culture into the 'heart' of the Dolomites. Via the Piave, Cadore 'drew from the north its wealth of merchandise, and from the south riches and culture; so that, while still an Alpine community, the peasant life developed into merchant life, not losing the virtues of the one, and gaining with the other tastes peculiar to the time and place' (*ibid.*, 278). We notice here a skilful jostling between geographic determinants and cultural capital, between proximity of the mountains to the city and Venice's subsequent impact on Titian. Venice allowed Titian to touch

‘the traffic of the known world’ and was where ‘he dipped into the stream of thought’, a place where the artist breathed the ‘atmosphere of art’ (*ibid.*, 279).

This unique geography allowed the mountaineer-cum-artist to become ‘a’ Titian: ‘one side of whose greatness rested upon the social splendour of Venice, but whose other side leaded against the mountain solitudes, and gave birth to a new thought in art, which has elevated landscape into an independent branch of design’ (*ibid.*). Titian is seen as the ‘originator’ of landscape art because of his birthplace Cadore, expressed by Titian’s ‘divine’ and ‘poetic’ brush: ‘It was done by no one else, because none like him lived with such a scene before him, and had his heart there’ (*ibid.*, 307). In a moment of national pride, Gilbert claims that Titian found his ‘true followers at last among the nature-loving painters of our northern isle’ (i.e. Turner), and they are perhaps in a better position to portray the mystery and pathos of nature, which ‘this Son of Cadore was the first to bring within the domain of Art’ (*ibid.*, 308-309).⁴ Titian and his ‘sharp purple line of mountains’ are again accommodated within an English modulated gaze.

Gilbert’s reading audience was not solely the artistically educated elite. Anna Jameson, for instance, through the publication of ‘Essays on the Lives of Remarkable Painters’ in the 1840s, had incredible impact in putting vast numbers of working class readers in touch with art, painting and architecture (Johnston 1994). The goal of such publications was ‘not to delight the connoisseur, but to improve public taste’, and this ‘kind’ of art appreciation, as it was hypothesized, hoped to generate a ‘civilising, domesticating effect’ among its readers (*ibid.*, 128). Accompanying Jameson’s essays were woodcuts and engravings of the world’s most famous works, which could be ‘placed in every home for both education and pleasure’ (*ibid.*, 130).

Canonized by the distinguished artist, critic and first president of the Royal Academy, Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), Venetian art – and that of Titian, in

particular – had already been deemed superior within the English hierarchy of art criticism for some time before Jameson. One way in which this ‘Italian’ artistic tradition was accommodated within English culture was through its association to English canonical poetry – the art form in which the English long considered themselves superior. Titian, says Jameson, may be ‘classed beyond the limits of nationality and periods; as with Homer and Shakespeare’, he belongs ‘to no particular “age or country, but to all time, and to the universe”’ (*ibid.*, 134-135). But this implication and association somehow links a universality of the High Renaissance artist to a notion of Englishness. Of the nature revealed in Titian’s art, Gilbert says similarly that ‘as to the Realism it gendered, and which in literature may be traced in the Shakespearian drama’ its influence is first seen in the colour of Titian’s palette (Gilbert 1869, 295).

The landscape of Venice had been branded within a specifically English poetic tradition, a practice owing much to Shelley and Byron. Gilbert makes no effort to break this mould, which incorporated great English poets into artistic discourses as the verbal counterpart to the visual. In *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* Byron says of Venice that ‘Shakespeare’s art | Had stamp’d her image in me’ (Canto IV, xvii). In referencing poetry in this way, Gilbert enacted a ‘Victorianization’ of the Dolomite landscape and in doing so lead to an English ‘colonization’ of both Titian’s art and the Venetian landscape. Jameson, like Gilbert, explicitly interchanges Titian for Venice and insists that ‘if you would take into your soul the very soul and inward life and spirit of Venice – breathe the same air – go to Titian’ (Jameson 1846, 17). The English ‘invasion’ of Titian’s backgrounds could therefore take place on the pages of Gilbert’s *Cadore* or by simply wandering around in London’s National Gallery – the cult of Titian did not necessarily imply a physically enacted pilgrimage to Italy.

Cadore was not pure art criticism. Nor was it pure travel guide. But it was a hybridized publication, both a handbook for travellers, a literal call for action,

and an artistic commentary, which allowed readers to imaginatively climb the canvas of Titian's backgrounds. Tourist incident, picture criticism, historical narrative, poetical association, landscape description, suggested routes and practical advice are all coalesced in this 'agreeable volume' in way that would appeal to the middle class reader and traveller confronting the field of cultural objects, art, artist and landscape Gilbert attempts to cultivate.⁵ It is also a book of its time. Previously, 'high art' themes, motifs and objects were circulated predominantly in exclusive and authoritative spheres.⁶

Gilbert writes in a moment, however, when high art was becoming 'symbolic forms and artefacts', which were 'not original paintings and sculptures, the "priceless" objects of social and economic privilege, but reproductions which belong to a circulating economy of images and texts' (Lew 1996, 831). His *Cadore* would at first seem to add to and support Jameson's 'popularization' and 'democratization' of high art within the working classes through the *Penny Magazine*, as well as Ruskin's 'civilizing' and 'educational' influence on the middle classes through his numerous volumes. Gilbert, like Jameson, clearly 'imagined a reader whose interest in self-cultivation was mediated by the pleasures of reading and the leisure activity of travel' (*ibid.*, 834). Gilbert's mountaineering and artistically interested audience, however, were more than simply middlebrow, bourgeois 'enthusiasts'.

Gilbert's place in the world of nineteenth-century art criticism and in the historiography of Titian is certainly overlooked today. Modern scholars acknowledge Titian's birth in Cadore, but few, if any, have accounted for the impact that the Dolomite landscape, rightly or wrongly, had on the man and his art in the same way as Gilbert. In the Victorian period, however, Cavalcaselle strongly supported Gilbert's thesis that the Dolomites were central to the formation of Titian's landscapes: 'But the barrenness of English research has in some measure been retrieved by the delightful work of Mr. Josiah Gilbert, whose

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bright pictures of the Cadorine country are not less charming than his insight into Titian's feeling for the scenery of the Dolomitic Alps' (Cavalcaselle and Crowe 1877, ix-x). Like Gilbert, Cavalcaselle finds importance in describing the minute detail of the natural characteristics of the landscape of Cadore and the Dolomites because:



Fig. 5.8 - William Dyce (1806-1864), *Titian Preparing to Make His First Essay in Colouring*, 1857, oil on canvas, City of Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums Collections, Aberdeen.

Titian who lived in his childhood amongst them, and visited them frequently in his manhood, transferred them to his pictures as frequently as the more expanded views of the lowlands, and there can be little doubt that the grandeur of the scenery which surrounded him in his infancy, made impress upon his mind, and helped produce that love of natural effects, which is so conspicuous in his works, and enabled him to become the greatest landscape painter in the Venetian school (*ibid.*, 33-34).

The cult of Titian, as secured by Gilbert, was also buttressed by a re-circulation of the artistic symbolic capital of Venice as the Gothic city. Nineteenth-century trends witnessed a 'rediscovery', restoration and revival of pre-Renaissance art, which lead to the Pre-Raphaelite and neo-Gothic movements in art and architecture, and to the elevation of architects such as A.W.N. Pugin and artists like William Holman Hunt and William Dyce (Errington 1992, 495). Dyce, for instance, had painted a youthful Titian in his native Cadore 'preparing to make his first essay in colouring' (Fig. 5.8).

This aligned also other Venetian artists, such as Giovanni Bellini, Cima da Conegliano, Palma il Vecchio and Giorgione, with English sentiments. These artists were then known for including mountainous backgrounds in their work, backgrounds that were often topographically linked with the Venetian hills and countryside (Fig. 5.9). The materialization of interest in landscape motifs fed into the promotion and recirculation of Renaissance Venetian art, especially of Titian (Brown, Pagden, and Anderson 2006). The compound effect of landscape, in visual representation and in emotional attraction, additionally motivated Victorian travellers to engage materially with the actual birthplaces of such artists in the Venetian landscape, seen as central to the configuration of landscape in England. A Dolomite petit tour could therefore involve a trip to the birthplace of Giorgione in Castelfranco, of Cima in Conegliano, or of Mantegna in Padua. But the deviation of itinerary to the Dolomites, testified by Gilbert's

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Cadore, to the birthplace of Titian in Pieve di Cadore, exemplifies the more radical of distinctions between the Grand and Petit Tours. The attraction of 'the endless hills of Titian', the Dolomites which were '*par excellence* Titian's mountains', satisfied the yearnings of Victorians to trace the backgrounds of his work on foot: away from the beaten, well-trodden Grand Tour Path (Amato 2004; Buzard 1991; Solnit 2002).

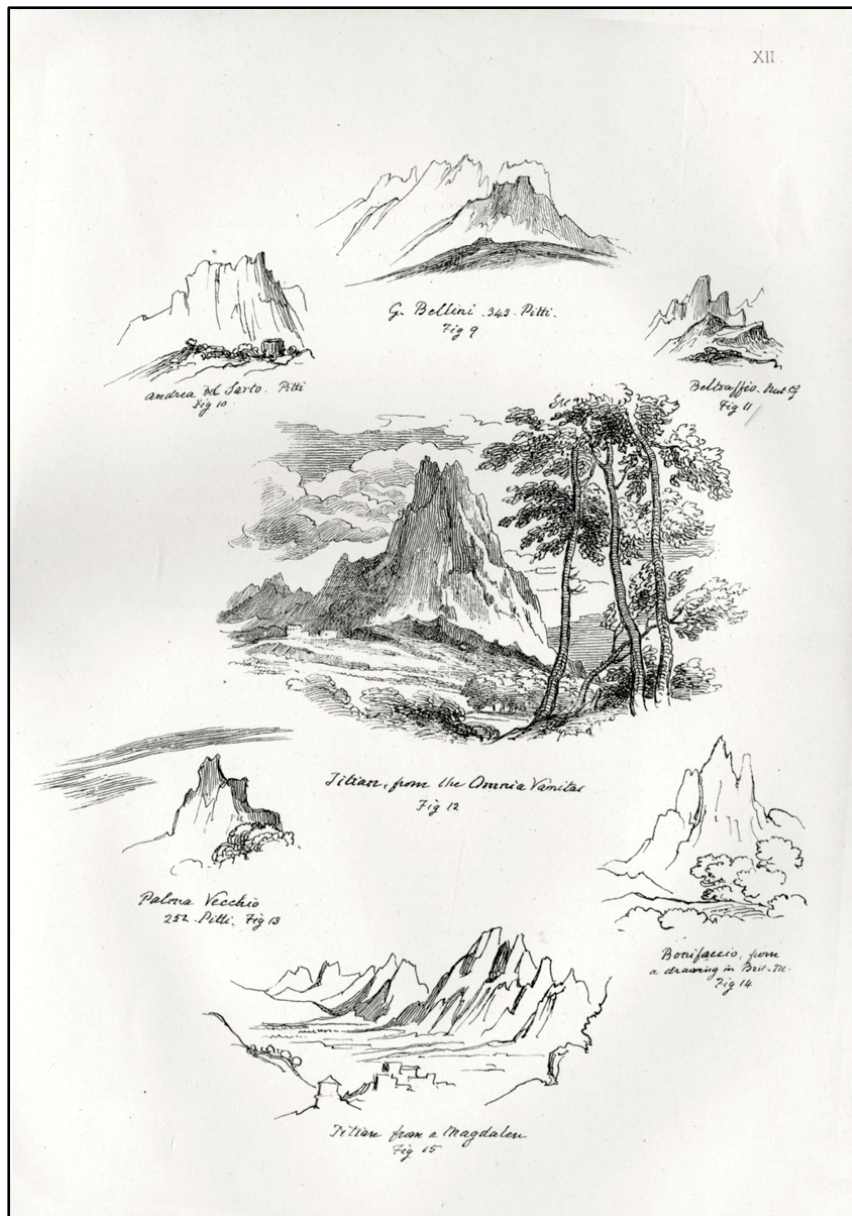


Fig. 5.9 - Gilbert's sketches from Bellini's, Boltraffio's, Del Sarto's, Titian's, Palma il Vecchio's, and Bonifacio's mountains taken from the backgrounds of their paintings, in Gilbert 1869, Plate 12. The distribution of the images shows Titian's centrality as a landscape painter.

For a contemporary critic, writing in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Josiah Gilbert was first and foremost a 'Dolomite enthusiast'; his 'entertaining' and 'well written' book on Titian's Cadore provided, in 'a clear, fluent and agreeable form, the results of really careful research among mountain villages and churches' as well as an 'account of tourists' adventures in the beautiful and fantastic regions of the Venetian Alps' (*The Pall Mall Gazette*, 1423, September 3, 1869). Along this line, a driven desire emerged to climb the backgrounds of Titian's canvasses (for a contemporary exploitation of these itineraries, see Mazza 2007); in this context, Gilbert's subsequent *Landscape in Art before Claude and Salvator* (1885) provides further clues:

Shoulder behind shoulder, peak behind peak, they peer, now restful in their massive lines, now restless and defiant. Heaving and tossing, they fade into the far distance; Titian could find in them forms to suit every exigence of his fertile fancy, and all the more that among them, not very prominent, but occurring here and there with apparitional suddenness, uprise the dolomites ... It was at Cadore that the companionship of cloud and mountain, which he was the first to dwell upon as a subject for art, would be constantly before him ... To him they were two great landscape powers, and he composed mountain and cloud together, each answering to each, like the parts of a chorus ... Well, therefore, may it be said that Titian stands at the head of landscape-art (Gilbert 1885, 353-355).

The combination of mountains and clouds, made famous by Ruskin, acquires in Cadore a productive scenic value similar to the one ascribed to Rosa's 'romantic rocks' during the Grand Tour. Away, however, from the importance that the Dolomite Mountains would acquire in mountaineering circles (see Chapters 4 and 7), they offer here a 'Dolomite Petit Tour'. Although not a new term, the Petit Tour, which usually identifies all minor tours off the beaten path within the context of the Grand Tour (Agostini 1992; Brilli 1988), provides, as

contextualised in the Dolomites, a new and more qualified application of the concept.

In the Victorian era, such cultivated detours were further enhanced by a curiosity for exploring the birthplaces of culturally illustrious figures, abroad and at home. Travelling to places famous for their associations with authors and artists, or with their novels and paintings, created a form of 'cult geography', to which I have already hinted at in Chapter 1, in relation to Salvator Rosa. In a similar way, for instance, Nicola Watson explored the making and unmaking of 'Scott Country' (2012); Douglas Pocock studied what he termed 'Brontë Country' (1987) and 'Catherine Cookson Country' (1992); Stephen Daniels noted that by the 1890s tours to 'Constable Country' in Suffolk prompted tourists to experience in reality the landscape painted in works such as *The Hay Wain* (1821), a painting which had come to symbolize an 'essential England' (Daniels 1993, 205, Matless 1998); Shelagh Squire has shown that visits to Hill Top Farm, the Lake District home of Beatrix Potter, conjured up emotions and meanings which connected less with the writer herself or the content of her Peter Rabbit books than 'values about happy childhoods and nostalgia for English country life' (1993, 117).

Gilbert's promotion of the Dolomites as Titian's country chimes well with the touristic practices described in the studies mentioned above. It was Gilbert's clear aim to describe the locations and landscapes of Titian's life and works in an attractive way, in order to convey the idea, through Titian, that the Dolomites were not just 'untrodden' mountains without name, but mountains attached to a prestigious pedigree – in other words, proper 'zones of civilizational prestige', as Collins would put it, able to function as a pole of attraction in its own right (Collins 2001). By following his actual footsteps, Gilbert's readers would have been able to associate Titian's paintings to the geography of the Dolomite landscape, away from the intractable debates about the 'essence' or 'raison

d'être' of mountaineering (see Chapter 3). Gilbert is central in promoting the Dolomites as a topographically demarcated and symbolically multifaceted Titian Country – place where visitors 'breathed the atmosphere' of the man and his art (Gilbert 1869, 279).

Through Gilbert, the Dolomites became, through Gilbert, the definitive pearl of the Venetian Petit Tour, symbolically located as they were in the physical background of Venice and in the imaginative background of Titian's paintings. Gilbert's *Cadore* (1869), complemented later by a learned dissertation on the origins of Venetian landscape painting (1885), provides the chief source to argue for a strong connection between landscape, art, memory and embodied experience of the Dolomite scenery. His branding and marketing the region as Titian Country can be considered as an evidence for the construction of an alternative heritage that worked alongside the promotion of the rocky Dolomites as a 'new playground' for mountaineers.

Gilbert's move is already evident in *The Dolomite Mountains* (1864), when he carefully distinguished his travel style, and consequently the one of his book, from the bombastic accounts of the Golden Age of Mountaineering – 'we must once admit that ours is not a story of Alpine *adventure*' (Gilbert and Churchill 1864, viii, italics in the text). But this becomes even clearer in his book on Cadore, in which he mobilizes a series of English symbols not immediately connected to mountaineering, be it understood in its narrow sense as a sport or in its more comprehensive one as a recreational pastime (see Chapter 3). By the time of Gilbert's *Cadore*, the art of Rosa, Turner and Friedrich, as well as the poetry of Byron, Wordsworth and Coleridge, had already created alpine imageries that had elevated the sublime and picturesque as qualities to be felt and acted upon within the natural landscape itself (see Chapter 1). These landscape motifs, emerged within a pre-Romantic tradition, endured through new symbolic interactions and new communication channels in the Victorian

era, sanctioning 'ways of seeing' (Witcher, Tolia-Kelly, and Hingley 2010, 119), still imbued with values once treasured within the contexts of the Grand Tour, the picturesque voyage, and the Romantic travel. Gilbert's Titian Country shows here how Victorians reinvented these values, negotiating them at the level of different layers of engagement with landscape scenery.

Gilbert, the 'traveller', circulated older ideas and imageries of travel, trying to impress a certain kind of cultivated traveller with an unknown country that ought to be known. But rather than associating the Dolomites with a generic 'picturesque' quality, imposed on them by popular guidebooks, through the mediated exploitation of say Radcliffe or Rosa (see Chapter 1), his Dolomite travel-cum-art guidebook classified these ideas and imageries under the 'signature' of Titian, associating the Dolomites to specific artistic representations of topographic reality (Fig. 5.10). If in Chapter 2 we have said that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Dolomites were lacking a 'sponsor' to be properly promoted; Gilbert's book provide them one of a unique prestige. Gilbert's dual approach provides here another inflection of the duplicity of landscape, along the representational and non-representational divide – the Dolomites become a landscape 'to watch', by looking at Titian's paintings, and landscape 'to do', by cultivating the fantasy of walking in his footsteps.

Perhaps books such as Gilbert's *Cadore* and Edwards' *Untrodden Peaks* mark the moment in which 'adventurous pioneers' became 'gregarious tourists' (Scaramellini 1996, 50; 2008). I am certainly not claiming here that the Dolomite Petit Tour negated the ostentations, gentility or romance of the Grand Tour, but to suggest that it was affiliated to a more nuanced 'sentimental voyaging', where art took the more seminal role in attracting tourists to less familiar locations. The genre of the travel guide lost its function as a simple travel description, so common to accounts of classic eighteenth century travel,

to become a catalogue of places 'worth seeing, admiring, celebrating, or remembering', and precisely marked out the stages of an active itinerary from the perspective and experience of the author in a form of invitation to the reader to be in the landscape itself (*ibid.*).



Fig. 5.10 - Josiah Gilbert, *Titian's Bridge*, in Gilbert 1869. In the background, the imposing Monte Marmarolo becomes the scenery of a landscape that bears Titian's signature.

This manifestation of interest in landscape in Victorian Britain mirrors Gilbert's descriptions of the Dolomites as a 'landscape' rather than a 'territory' or 'terrain' (see Chapter 2). The 'scenery of Cadore and its neighbourhood [which] inspired Titian's landscapes' (Gilbert 1869, vii), for example, not only serves to locate his text within in the interests and intellectual curiosity of the time, but it also differentiated it from earlier and other contemporary Alpine and mountain travelogues. Not simply pinned to the prevailing aesthetic-cultural concerns of the sublime or picturesque, to the great literary or pictorial accomplishments of romanticism, Gilbert recycles the aura of Renaissance

masters in order to give specific meaning to the Dolomite landscape; and, in so doing, he satisfied the demand of a large reading audience and responded to the multifaceted backgrounds and cultural concerns of his public. In discussing Titian's 'least known compositions', still placed in little fascinating mountain villages, amid the 'unknown' and 'mysterious' Dolomites, for instance, Gilbert frequently refers to the 'romantic forms' and 'scenery', the 'sublime and solitary' nature of gorges, 'where the mule path is carried above tremendous depths, or skirts the torrent roaring between magnificent walls of dolomite', 'their sublime monotheism', and to their 'picturesque variety' of forms, lines, scenes and views, as well as to the 'picturesqueness' of the histories and stories of particular Dolomite peoples (Gilbert 1869, 64, 77, 288).

In the same vein, Gilbert's Venice is at the same time the 'Venice of Titian' and the 'Venice of modern art' – that is, 'the Venice of Turner and of Ruskin' (*ibid.*, 1). There is no surprise at Gilbert's keenness in quoting the 'eloquent' Ruskin, given his significance in Victorian popular art criticism and Gilbert's subject matter.⁷ He includes a 'delicately touched pencil outline' sketch of the Antelao by him (Fig. 5.4) and employs his texts for supporting his own central argument that Titian's mountainous homeland supplied the mountain 'type' most 'frequented in Titian's mind' and art (Fig. 5.11) – the Pelmo, Antelao and Marmarolo providing the 'ruling' influences (*ibid.*, 118). Gilbert's Dolomite excursion is set in the background of 'the great world of Venice', cast simultaneously through the eyes of Titian and Ruskin, and considers the city-state, and its mountain range, as the historical, geographic and emotional driving forces behind the superlative quality of Titian's art.

Titian Country

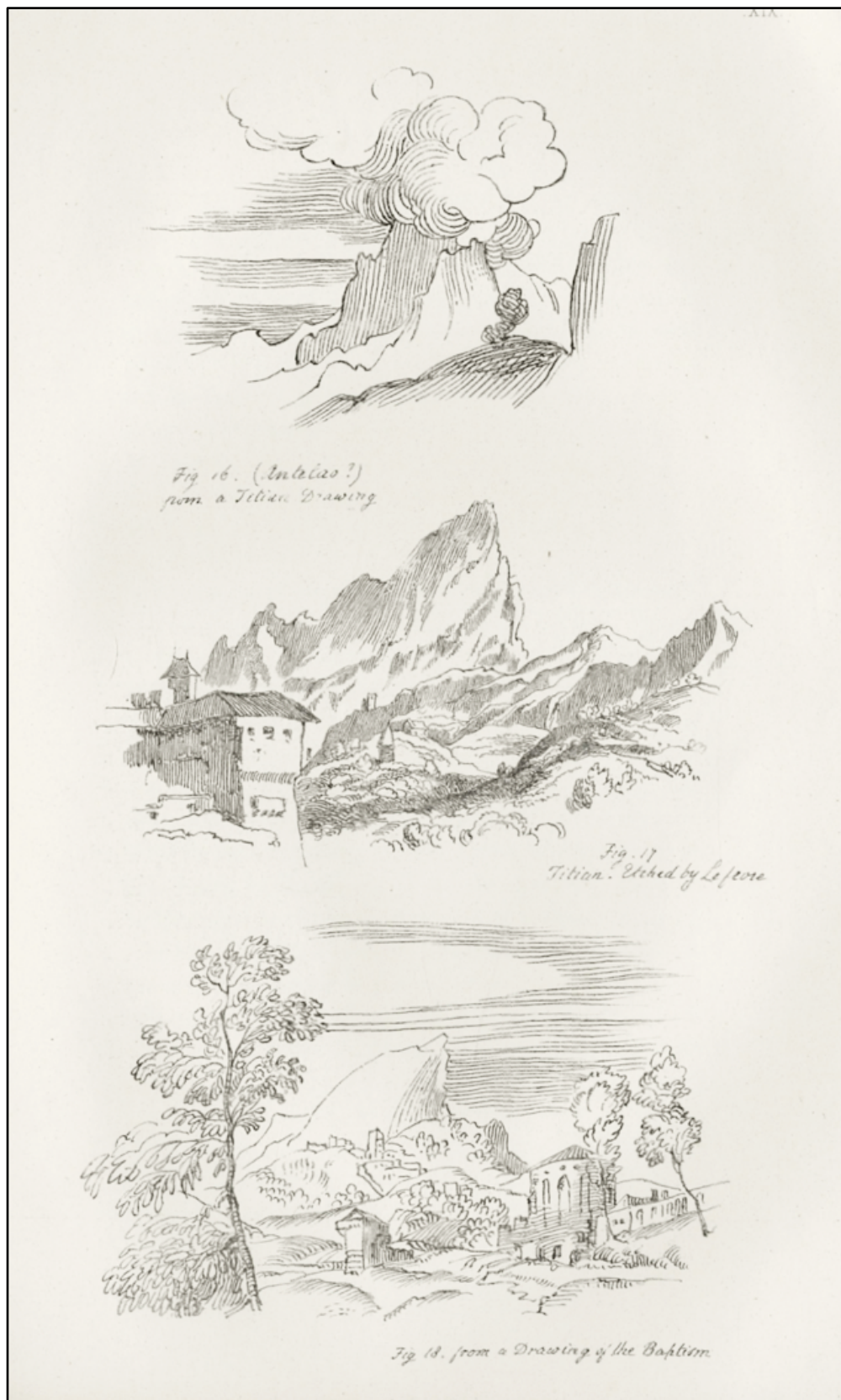


Fig. 5.11 - Gilbert's sketch of Titian's backgrounds with ascription to potential Dolomite peaks, in Gilbert 1869, Plate 19.

Gilbert's Titian is 'Il divino Tiziano', 'Cadore's greatest son' and his purposeful travel in the Dolomites hence 'centres in' him. He invites his readers 'to participate, so far as may be, in the pleasure [he has] experienced in rambling over this country; in searching out its history; above all in tracing its influence upon the life and genius of Titian' (Gilbert 1869, viii). To attract also the alpinist, Titian himself is cast as a mountaineer – not only were the mountains he 'climbed' and the forests he 'wandered' in his 'favourite themes', but also Dolomite mountain air was 'the first he breathed and he yearly breathed afresh' (*ibid.*, 3). As a travel schedule driven by Titian, the Dolomite Petit Tour, was not 'reduced to sketchy presentations of places and itineraries' like those seen in the earlier guides that primarily focused on the picturesque as an aesthetic framework for the content and form of a 'romantic journey' (Scaramellini 1996, 54).

Titian's art and biography provide *Cadore* with well-researched, hard and historical facts about the topographic influences the Dolomite landscape had on Titian's art and legacy, and Gilbert applies these without imposing on that landscape an anti-modern or anti-utilitarian standpoint, which we could encounter in the purely picturesque tour guides (Buzard 1993, 36). But, as already mentioned, Titian was, in Gilbert's eyes, a 'mountain man' and 'mountaineer'; and in calling Titian 'the first of the moderns', he defined Titian's quality as 'able to antedate the most modern features of modern landscape art' and artists (Gilbert 1869, 60, 67). Gilbert openly acknowledged, additionally, the improved access to landscape views, and Titian-related places, that modern rail and road developments permitted, which would have been, perhaps, an unforthcoming admission in earlier, more broad-spectrum and solely picturesque guidebooks.

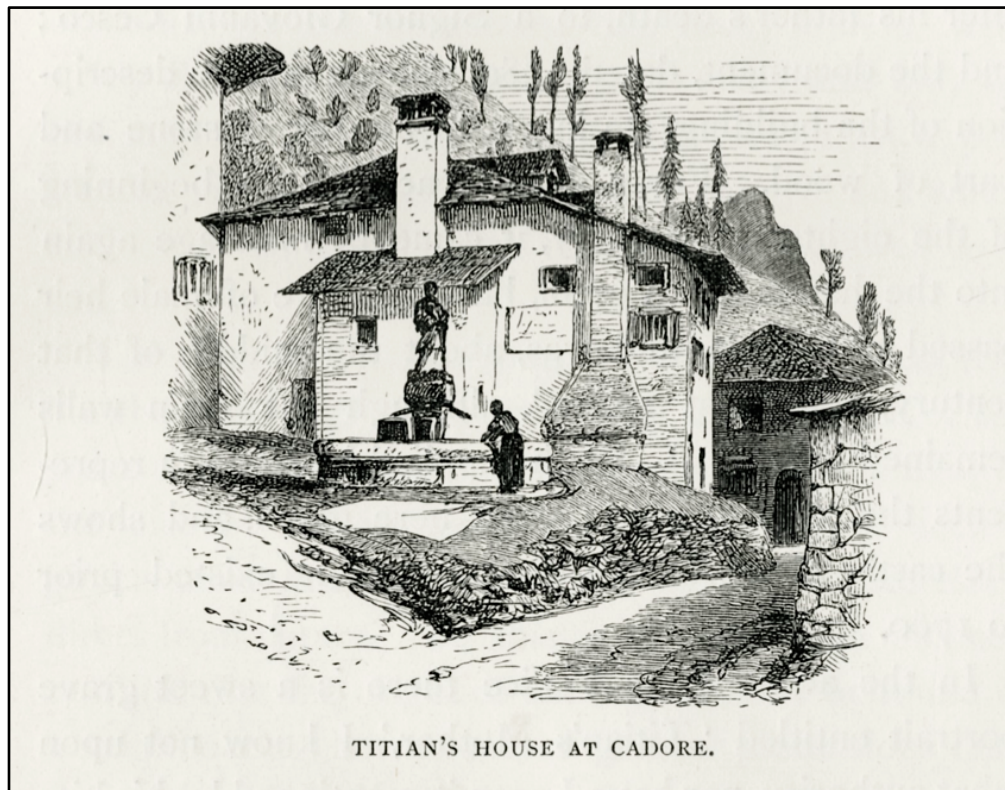


Fig. 5.12 - Josiah Gilbert, *Titian's House at Cadore*, wood engraving, 1869, in Gilbert 1869, 103.

Cadore's stirring evocations of Dolomite landscapes to be beheld in Titian's art and experienced in reality were complemented and refracted by Gilbert's particular focus on the actual house and birthplace of Titian (Fig. 5.12). Titian's house becomes the central landmark in the Dolomite Petit Tour that invites a reflection on the recirculation of imagery and symbolism attached to the master. I have already mentioned, in the opening section of this chapter, the kinds of sentiments that Titian's houses, both in Cadore and Venice (Fig. 5.12 and Fig. 5.13), could evoke in Victorian travellers (Ermstrom 1999, 430; Schulz 1982). Similarly to Gilbert, Anna Jameson too blurs the generic boundaries of novel and travelogue 'through the creation of a complex "sensitive" narrator ... in her essay "The House of Titian", her purpose is art criticism and a demand for greater recognition of the artist's work' (Saunders 2012, 127). But in Jameson's time, this was still attached to the aura of Venice.



Fig. 5.13 - Josiah Gilbert, *Titian's House in Venice from the Sketch in Cadore*, wood engraving in Gilbert 1869, after drawing by Giuseppe Cadorin in Cadorin 1833.

Gilbert added to this momentum, however, a form of pilgrimage, aptly interpreted by Leader Scott, suggesting that a nineteenth-century traveller could recover what is valuable in Titian's legacy by wandering in and around Cadore itself, about its piazza and in its church; but most vital in this itinerary would be a visit to Titian's house. Only then, in the house in which Titian 'first saw the light' and 'began his celebrated life' (Gilbert 1869, 102), would the traveller be able to 'understand Titian's country' and make 'real acquaintance' with the landscape and with the man (Gilbert 1869, 82).⁸

Despite the passages of time, the walls of the house 'here still are the four walls that sheltered his childhood' and an invitation to Gilbert's readers to climb the hill behind the house would reveal the centrality of its location: 'It is truly the eye, as well as the heart, of Cadore' (*ibid.*, 114). From here at sunset

readers/walkers see that the 'green hill of Cadore is all golden, and the sky is flushed with colour, and you will feel more at home in Titian's birthplace' (*ibid.*, 113). Titian's house in Cadore serve as a deeper metaphor, however, beyond a simple appeal to the tourist-reader's fanaticised hunger to regain the painter's aura by visiting his onetime home. Cadore will only become familiar to its Victorian visitors if the landscape itself is attuned to a Titianesque scene, which in turn enunciates a history of Titian, both in terms of his life and work, in the present tense. In line with Gilbert's assumed motives, the landscape surrounding Titian's birthplace in *Cadore* paradoxically acts to elevate Titian to a status of timelessness.

Birthplace fascination, obsession even, represents a cultural practice that had been established long before Gilbert and emerged from attitudes that defined our ideas about the necessity of creating libraries, archives and museums in which to contain culturally valuable objects from the fourteenth century on. Paula Findlen reminds us that 'late Renaissance humanists took pilgrimages to Petrarch's tomb at Arquà, interviewed alleged ancestors of Petrarch's famous muse Laura, and devised entire tours of Italy and southern France in the hope of recapturing the historical experience of Petrarch's life' (Findlen 1998, 106). For these pilgrims, no encounter was more direct or real than one involving the remains of Petrarch's literary life. Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), the great biographer of Italian artists, likewise took pains to describe his journey to 'a Camaldolese monastery to see a crucifix "with Giotto's name written upon it, in his own hand"' (*ibid.*).⁹ Gilbert's particular focus on the house of Titian in Cadore is a recirculation, therefore, of an earlier humanist revival of learning about the material and symbolic world through engagement with physical places; places proffered as repositories of cultural memory associated with particular cultural figures.

In Gilbert's Victorian pilgrimage to the 'Casa Tiziano', the material past of Titian's life is made real through his insistence that the landscape and the morphology of Cadore's surrounding mountains constitutes simultaneously an authentically recognisable feature in his art and an attractively palpable element to be experienced by engaging emotionally with the house of Titian: 'It is indeed but a cottage ... and there is nothing to indicate the chamber where he is born'; but, more importantly, Gilbert writes, 'it is pleasanter to look at the place under the open sky, as an object in the landscape whose great features remain as Titian saw them, than to pry into the fusty interior of an artisan's home' (Gilbert 1869, 102). Rather than an artefact or trinket from Titian's childhood, as in Dyce (Fig. 8), the landscape itself became the talisman of his art and life that encapsulated Titian's material and imagined past. The Dolomites are themselves a monumental museum to Titian, and the best way to approach this museum, according to Gilbert, is from Pieve di Cadore in the very 'heart' of Titian Country.

Substantial amounts of geographic literature concerns the cultural value ascribed to places in this way because of the life or birth of literary or artistic figures in or associated with them. By interlacing some of these approaches through Gilbert's *Cadore*, I show that Gilbert was in fact acting to create a specific cultural, geographic and touristic space unique to the Dolomites in the entire Alps. Santesso reminds us that literary and artistic tourism is part of a well established phenomenon that works against plasticized portrayals of space: 'English tourists abroad sought out the birthplaces of ancient authors and by the middle of the seventeenth century, English surveyors and writers of guidebooks were busy locating the birthplaces of important English literary figures' (Santesso 2004, 383).

By the eighteenth century, Grand Tourists were accommodating 'visits to places with familiar literary connections' within their Italian tours (*ibid.*, 380).

Gilbert's *Cadore* represents a type of imaginative interaction with an artistic birthplace that partly 'represents the legacy of an earlier tradition' of artistic tourism, which saw early travel guides promote Stratford as the place to see and experience the birthplace Shakespeare or Bread Street, the site of John Milton's birth in London (*ibid.*, 378). English tourists began early on to seek out such biographical locations, and such visits can be linked to what MacCannell outlines as the process of touristic marker involvement, in which only a small indicator is required for tourists to engage with a historical person or event (perhaps only marked by a plaque); a process in which the signifier becomes the signified (MacCannell 1976). For Gilbert, the Cadore landscape surrounding Titian's house becomes the marker of Titian, symbolized and signified in a unique combination of geography, location, biography and circumstance.

In John Urry's classic study of the tourist gaze, the emergence of a Tourist Gaze is traced through the 'professional experts' who helped to 'construct and develop' it (Urry 1990, 1). Following Urry's usage of Foucault's 'clinical gaze', we can dub Gilbert as the 'professional expert' who is party to a potential hierarchy of gazes: 'The eye that knows', Foucault writes, 'is the eye that governs' (Foucault 1973, 89). In *Cadore*, however, Gilbert, although filling the role of the all-knowing expert, suggests a focus on both the 'site' and the 'symptom' of the Dolomite landscape to his readers through his dual focus on the landscape of Titian's birth and the landscape evident in his mountainous backgrounds (*ibid.*, 122). In contrast to literatures that consider more controlled literary and early heritage sites (e.g. Stratford, as discussed in Santesso, 2004), readers and tourists were not granted any 'control' over the landscape in *Cadore*, and nor was this possible. Therefore their interpretations could never have been reduced to homogenized or 'full' understanding of the Dolomite landscape or of Titian. On the other hand, visitors to the Dolomites may have had a better imagining to what they would gaze upon because of familiarity with Titian's

backgrounds available to them in many different forms, allowing them a certain epistemological power over the landscape observed.

Gilbert's Non-Representational Gaze

Gilbert's Victorian construction and promotion of Titian's country can be considered, therefore, as evidence for the emergence of a heritage of Titian that works alongside his elevation of landscape themes – in a formula, it transforms 'Titian's Country' into 'Titian Country'. This construction of Dolomite heritage, 'its process of creation', as Mike Crang puts it (1994, 346), is motivated by Gilbert's interest in Titian and his homeland. The way in which Gilbert sets into motion a set of imagery and symbolism pertaining to the Dolomite landscape will later help substantiate the argument that English interventions in the Dolomite landscape became catalysts for the solidification, or at least the modulation, of an English heritage in the Dolomites. Gilbert remembers the past history of the Dolomites exclusively through the cult of Titian and his works; but Gilbert's own practice of material engagement with the Dolomite geography contributes to a Titian-inspired memory, which became both inscribed in the Dolomite landscape and in the minds of the English tourists, whom he subsequently encouraged to go there. For those that did not travel, *Cadore* certainly had potential 'significance in the development of popular geographical knowledge' of a relatively unknown, unfrequented place (Gilbert 1999, 280).

Perhaps it is simpler to imagine how English sites and landscapes relating to English cultural figures – Wordsworth or Potter in the Lakes, Shakespeare in Stratford, Jane Austen in Hampshire, Turner in Margate, or Constable in Suffolk, to name a few – are used to promote versions of national heritage and identity. The anomaly I propose here is that, in some way, English cultural memory is uniquely ascribed to a foreign landscape, the Dolomites, through the appropriation of a foreign artist, namely Titian. Gilbert's Titian country is a

place for English travellers and readers to imagine Titian's life but its landscape becomes understandable and mappable, conquerable, even, through a nuanced English appreciation of Titian's painted landscapes. Today, as we will see in the epilogue of this work, the intervention of this English gaze has been significant for Italy's promotion of its own cultural heritage in the Dolomites. Has Gilbert's *Cadore* 'led to a more intense, contested and reflexive search for the contemporary and political significance' (Edensor 2001, 69) of Titian and the Dolomites, in the same way that the Dolomites, expressed through Titian, became important for a Victorian cultural memory?

Gilbert's Dolomite landscape is a 'material landscape constituted by networks of practices, projects, and activities, so its images, including both fine art and tourism iconography, reinforce its significance and meanings in simplified, recognizable images' (Wall and Reichwein 2011, 73). Titian, as highlighted in *Cadore*, certainly shaped and was shaped by traditional ideas of aesthetically agreeable landscapes, as also testified by Ruskin and Jameson. But *Cadore's* dual purpose as art criticism and guidebook acted to form, in addition, a popular English geographical knowledge of the Dolomites by capturing and circulating fine art imagery and symbolism for a touristic enterprise. Titian's backgrounds may represent a static, metonymic viewpoint, but as a 'genre of cultural production constitutes dynamic systems of meaning' about the social construction of landscape and nature (*ibid.*, 74). As Simon Schama puts it, 'Landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock ... once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery' (Schama 1995, 61).

Titian's backgrounds are purely representational of specific landscapes to be found on a map, in one sense, but they are also non-representational. They

encouraged material and affective engagement with the landscape that imbricated the English climbing, walking, rambling body with the landscape, producing a 'shifting mood, tenor, colour or intensity of places and situation' (Wylie 2005, 236) in which 'self and world overlap in a ductile and incessant enfolding and unfolding' (*ibid.*, 240). Gilbert intersects, confuses even, his own experience of being in and observing the Dolomites with the art of Titian, both of which are subject to personal, reflexive interpretations and are 'affected' by the presence of the mountains themselves:

And again there was in Titian a perception of that physiognomy of mountains which gives them personality, and makes them almost instinct with emotion. Sometimes he places them in sphinx-like attitudes of repose, embodiments of enormous passive force; sometimes they writhe and twist like hooded giants struggling from their bonds. Or he sets them as tutelary powers to reside over some gentle scene, or nestling village. For Titian regarded them less as enemies than friends; not as a lowlander shrinking from their awfulness, but as a mountaineer, familiar with, almost welcoming their terror, because conscious of their encompassing strength (Gilbert 1869, 68).

The Dolomites here are charged with a touristic potential based on the material and symbolic energy associated with Titian, which Gilbert unravel and disseminate, posing it as 'a complex imbrication of the material organization and shape of the landscape, its symbolic meaning, and the ongoing sensual perception and experience of moving through space' (Edensor 2000, 82), with the eye, I would add, and with the body. The way in which Gilbert moves simultaneously on a Dolomite map and on a Titian's canvas could be seen as a multi-layered way of institutionalizing, domesticating and homogenizing nature and art, under the aegis of a touristic engagement with the landscape.

However, he is more than simply attempting to enact a 'romantic gaze' which typically combined walking in landscape with an uncontaminated search

for the sublime and picturesque, or to capture an 'imperialism of the eye', maximised by the absence of all human intervention (Edensor 2000, 91; Urry 1992). Robin Jarvis argues, for instance, that Romantic walkers insisted 'on clearing the autonomous space for themselves, in which the self could be reduced, physically and intellectually, nearer to its essentials' (Jarvis 1997, 40). While keen to highlight the romantic, 'untrodden' and 'sacred' aspects of the Dolomites, Gilbert also lingers on the human qualities of small mountain communities, their industriousness, familial relationships, and feudal warring, for instance, and allows for the mediation of landscape through pure representation and contextualisation more than anything else. Gilbert informs a way of seeing the Dolomite landscape by employing Titian as visually representative of the landscape in order to 'transform' the Dolomites 'into meaningful sign or spectacle' for his English readership (Wall and Reichwein 2011, 74). The gaze he maintained in *Cadore* is re-circulated instantly as his readers sought to view the original, whether in the landscape proper or in Titian's art.

Collins' 'symbolic' interaction ritual chains' model (2004) is a useful framework for unravelling these cultural symbols and their attachment to the Dolomite landscape. This approach avoids a linear, restrictive account of meaning distributed from producer to consumer – Gilbert to reader – and instead considers different contexts and levels in which the same symbol can have different 'magnetisms' or meanings for different groups at different stages of the cycle, in different times and in different spaces. It is true that the visitor's material encounter with the Dolomites may have been framed and conditioned by Gilbert's gaze, his own recirculation of Renaissance art; but Gilbert's recirculation of imagery is not exclusive and nor does it preclude the addition of new images to this circulation that are imagined by the individual. They may 'escape these conventions to produce meanings and practices of their own'

(Edensor 2000, 100). In reality tourists to the Dolomites were subjected to more iconographic material than the one provided by Gilbert or Titian; physical movement within the landscape was 'likely to be confronted by the contingent, the unfamiliar and the unforeseeable' (*ibid.*). Gilbert regularly added a practical awareness of the landscape and climate to his aesthetic appreciation, often accounting for the terrain and giving advice to walkers.

Cadore or Titian's Country allows cultural geographers, interested in the intersection of represented and material landscapes, to examine an early and forgotten contribution to the Victorian emergence of touristic practices in and appreciation of mountain landscapes, which focuses on a multi-layered, non-linear gaze 'towards' the landscape under scrutiny. With Gilbert the Dolomites become a repository of meaning that is designed for and designated as English; but is novel to the previous discourses of mountain appreciation, seen in the Golden Age of mountaineering, because of the value he ascribes to the cultural density of a specific location and geography. The matrix of topographic and cultural memory is forged through a forceful and convincing recirculation of landscape imagery, but this recirculation and engagement with landscape iconography accelerates when the landscape is doubly acted upon: the Dolomites become real, and its symbolism activated, when readers of *Cadore* actually see Titian's mountainous backgrounds, embody his homeland landscape, and weave through place and the 'culture on the ground' (Ingold 2004), as this example makes sufficiently clear:

This time, instead of the smooth ascending road from Tai, we will take the wandering footpath that dips into the deep valley with its lush grass, crosses a small brook, hides itself among low bushes, and then climbs suddenly and steeply to the field at the back of Titian's house. Here, on the velvet slope, the boy painter, his fingers stained mayhap with flower juices, watched the sunsets of four hundred years ago, and saw, as you may see now, those strange, stark shapes, the pyramids, obelisks, and

towers of Mte. Marmarolo, shooting into the sky, or piercing the cloud wreaths. They must have made their mark on the boy's observant mind; they must have lived in the old man's memory-shapes, during a hundred or a thousand years the same, in the morning pale and ghostly, in the evening soaring darkly against the glowing west (Gilbert 1869, 113-114).

The Dolomite landscape is not simply the rock and stone it is made of, and it is not simply a landscape to see. The geographical setting, the historical representation and the various processes of cultural imagination inscribed in this landscape contribute simultaneously to combine and constitute its meaning. It is not simply Titian's representation, material or otherwise, nor is it just Gilbert's imagining or recycling it either. The material-symbolic matrix of the Dolomite landscape provides further clues for understanding the relationship between the representation of the Dolomites and the human experience of them – a relationship that in the Victorian period becomes 'artistic' in terms of the production and consumption of its prestige.

Notes

¹ In a later annotation to *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin highlighted the passage: 'All this is quite right. The group of precipices above the centre of the Alpine line is the finest I know in any view of the chain from the south, and the extent of white peaks to the north-east always takes me by renewed surprise, in clear evenings' (1903, 10: 5), as he had done in the letter to his father: 'I do not know if it is the same in Switzerland, but certainly the best views of the Alps, and on the whole the most striking scenery here, of distant effects of every kind, are in the winter' (*ibid.*).

² The original drawing, Russian chalk on cream paper, 24.5x29.7cm, is preserved at the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

³ Crowe and Cavalcaselle politely refused Murray's suggestion, later unsuccessfully reiterated to Crowe's wife, in 1904, after their death, when the proposal for the revision of their *History of Painting in Northern Italy* was made by Roger Fry (Graham 2001; 2004).

⁴ Perhaps Gilbert would be at odds with Ruskin here, who said that 'Turner is the only man who has ever given an entire transcript of the whole system of nature, and is ... the only perfect landscape painter whom the world has ever seen' (Ruskin 1903, 2: 61). For Gilbert, contrastingly, Titian deserved the title of the 'Homer of Landscape' (Gilbert 1869, 34).

⁵ *The Pall Mall Gazette* (London, England), Friday, September 3, 1869; Issue 1423. See also Reynolds 1869; 'The Dolomite Mountains' 1864; 'Cadore, or Titian's Country' 1869. These offer contemporary reviews of *Cadore*, supporting that Gilbert examination of Titian's birthplace identifies 'such portions of the landscape as were derived from its scenery', according to *The Athenaeum* of July 24, 1869, page 405.

⁶ Discourses on high art were previously the reserve of the likes of Reynolds, whose rhetoric was recirculated by the critic-philosopher William Hazlitt (1778-1830) and later by Ruskin, who were perceived as authoritative 'experts'.

⁷ Elsewhere, 'Turner's great Expounder', to use Gilbert's terminology for Ruskin, considers Turner and Titian as equals: 'look to some great man, Titian, or Turner, or whomsoever it may be, as the model of perfection in art' (Ruskin 1903, 16: 303).

⁸ Readers were additionally assured, in relation to its authenticity, that 'this was the identical house of Titian in Cadore [that] has been proved by the same patient enquirer, Cadorin, who discovered his house in Venice. Legal documents in both cases are conclusive' (Gilbert 1869, 103).

⁹ Gilbert called Cavalcaselle the 'New Vasari' (Gilbert 1869, 10); Vasari 'absurdly describes [Cadore] as "a small town five miles from the Alps"', as a place, therefore, that 'attracted little notice' his time (Gilbert 1869, 25).



CHAPTER 6

Picturesque Mountains

What these noble giants want is not simply that somebody should go and look at them ... They want to have picturesque villages and church spires in their valleys; to have zigzag paths traced up their sides by the feet of succeeding generations; to have châteaux built on the pastures, and terraced fields creeping up their sides.

— Leslie Stephen

In Chapter 4 it was argued that the English ‘invention’ of the Dolomites involved ethnographic, feminine, domestic, and artistic dimensions; an invention entailing an approach to the mountainous landscape amply exemplified by Amelia B. Edwards’ travel book, *Untrodden Peaks* (1873). It was also proposed that in the eyes of the English, the Dolomite landscape was appropriated through a picturesque gaze. Josiah Gilbert’s *Cadore or Titian’s Country* (1869), as discussed in the previous chapter, helped establish the Dolomites as the geographical space in which a special kind of artistic sentiment, came progressively to be perceived as embodied in the landscape itself. In this chapter, the focus resides on the artistic element of the picturesque, already identified by Gilbert in both the art of Titian and the physicality of his native mountains, characterised by ‘picturesque involutions and fantastic drifting’ (Gilbert 1869, 38) in the elevation of the Dolomites as a pictorial subject in the English art market.

This chapter argues that the ‘Dolomite picturesque’ was a particular aesthetic response to landscape, which recycled and transformed the cultural movement of the picturesque. The subsequent relationship between an English practice of the picturesque and the Dolomite landscape was further motivated by a matrix of topographic memory that inscribed the picturesque into the Lake District through the art of Turner and poetry of Wordsworth (Dilley 1990; Squire 1990 and 1988). Through a discussion that comprises four main areas – ‘Revelling the Scenery’, ‘Picturing the Picturesque’, ‘Picturing the Dolomites’, and ‘Picturing Practices’ – my argument rests, in line with some of the overall aims of this work, with the provocative suggestion that Englishness and English culture inscribed itself into the Dolomite landscape. It is true, as Malcolm Andrews maintained, that in the eighteenth century an ‘Educated awareness of what constitutes an ideal landscape’ meant that ‘the tourist travelling through the Lakes and North Wales will loudly acclaim the native beauties of British landscape by invoking idealised foreign models’ (Andrews 1989, 3); this chapter explores the way in which British tourists imposed on the Dolomite landscape a gaze crafted at home. The chief exemplar for explaining this transfer of the picturesque is the Alpine artist Elijah Walton.

Revelling the Scenery

Towards the 1890s, the Alpine Club was not representing anymore the ‘new school of mountaineering’ as described by Stephen (1871, 35–68). In 1892, Clinton Thomas Dent (1850-1912) included ‘mountaineering’ in *The Badminton Library of Sports and Pastimes*, the sportive and recreational series, conceived and founded by Henry Somerset, 8th Duke of Beaufort (1824–1899), in 1885. Dent’s interpretation of mountaineering is quite extensive – a ‘many-sided sport of which climbing is but a single, though a very important, branch’ (Dent 1892, 90). In a chapter outlining ‘The Principles of Mountaineering’, Dent dared to

advance the idea that ‘a man may be an active or even a good climber and yet a very poor mountaineer’, and to recommend that ‘a proper balance must be observed between the various departments by anyone who wishes to excel; and to mountaineer well means to mountaineer safely’ (*ibid.*). The alluded ‘departments’ include a series of various activities as alternatives to climbing, seen as ‘a man’s purely gymnastic prowess on rock or snow’: walking, reconnoitring, snowcrafting, sketching, photographing, and camping, including instructions for climbing with and without guides.

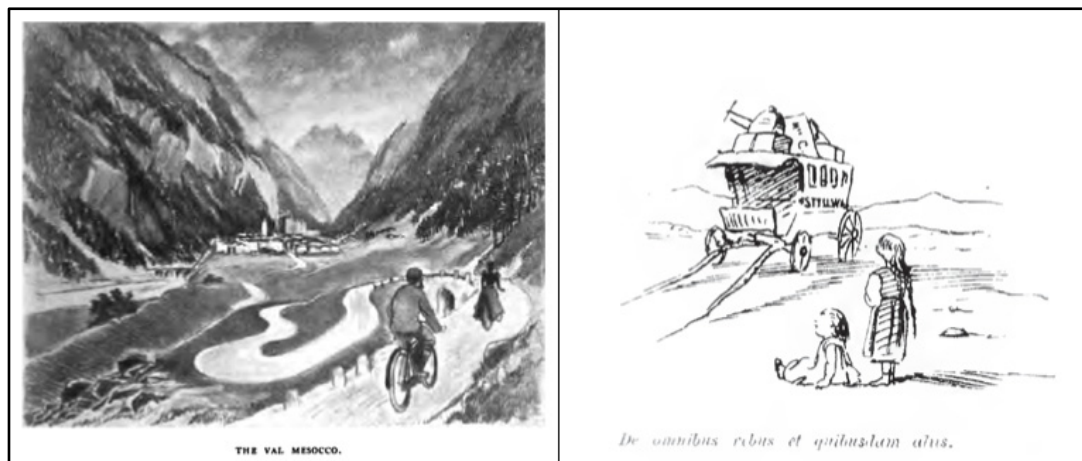


Fig. 6.1 - Left: John Pennell, *The Val Mesocco*, from Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *Over the Alps on a Bicycle*, 1899, p. 69. Right: Elizabeth Tuckett, *De omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*, from Elizabeth Tuckett's, *Pictures in Tyrol and Elsewhere*, 1867, frontispiece plate.

The trend to provide different modes of ‘doing’ the mountains spurred in those years the publication of several guides and travelogues suggesting alternative ways of experiencing and appreciating the Alps. For example, the American couple Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell, dedicated their pioneering book *Over the Alps on a Bicycle* (Pennell and Pennell 1898) to the Alpine Club, with a slightly polemical overtone: ‘To the Alpine Club, to whom I should like to point out that there is another and more delightful method of climbing’ (*ibid.*, 10).¹ Similarly, Elizabeth Tuckett’s (1837-1872) *Pictures in Tyrol and Elsewhere: From a Family Sketch-Book* (1867) starts with a chapter entitled ‘Breaking the Ice, or Mountaineering in an Omnibus’ (Fig. 6.1); her most

acclaimed picture book, *How We Spent the Summer, or a Voyage en Zigzag, in Switzerland and Tyrol, with Some Members of the Alpine Club* (1864), enlists numerous activities that the ladies of the party undertook while their companions were busy with climbing.

In the last chapter of his acclaimed but controversial book, *My Climbs in the Alps and Caucasus* (1895), Albert Frederick Mummery (1855–1895, see Hansen 2004; Unsworth 1967) took issues with Dent's approach to mountaineering, claiming for a narrower interpretation of the sport. But while doing so, he levelled a critique also to the Alpine Club. His conception of mountaineering is somehow deprived of adventure, of sensationalism, of conquest, away therefore from the view popularized during the Golden Age. Its essence is now the essence of a modern sport, which 'consists exclusively, in pitting the climber's skill against the difficulties opposed by the mountain' (Mummery 1895, 325):

It is true that extraordinary progress has been made in the art of rock climbing, and that, consequently, any given rock climb is much easier now than thirty years since, but the essence of the sport lies, not in ascending a peak, but in struggling with and overcoming difficulties (*ibid.*, 326).

This quote, often abridged, is rightly interpreted by several scholars as marking a turning point in the history of mountaineering, a moment in which, as Simon Thompson puts it, alpinism moved from a 'gentlemanly' to an 'gymnastic' activity (Thompson 2010, 53; Hansen 1991, 358). The Alps did not constitute a danger anymore, said Mummery, not because they are not dangerous per se, but because, as already quoted, the skills to deal with them have improved (Mummery 1895, 324), to the point that even the inexperienced tourist can find ample information in the increasing publications on the subject (Coolidge 1889; Neate 1980).

In his entry on Mummery for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Peter Hansen states that, 'in 1880, his election to the Alpine Club was blocked by a snobbish coterie for reasons which remain unclear, possibly out of jealousy at his climbing record, but more probably because he was "in trade"' (Hansen 2004). Mirco Gasparetto, following Pietro Crivellaro (2001, 25), suggests, instead, that the reason for Mummery's exclusion from the Alpine Club was in fact connected to his new interpretation of mountaineering (Gasparetto 2012, 212). I tend to agree; especially on the basis of this passage taken 'The Pleasures and Penalties of Mountaineering', written after Mummery was eventually accepted as a member of the Alpine Club in 1888:

Doubtless my difference with the great authorities referred to above is, in the main, due to a totally different view of the *raison d'être* of mountaineering. Regarded as a sport, some danger is, and always must be, inherent in it; regarded as a means of exercise amongst noble scenery, for quasi-scientific pursuits, as the raw material for interesting papers, or for the purposes of brag and bounce, it has become as safe as the ascent of the Rigi or Pilatus was to the climbers of thirty years since. But these pursuits are not mountaineering in the sense in which the founders of the Alpine Club used the term, and they are not mountaineering in the sense in which the elect – a small, perchance even a dwindling body – use it now (Mummery 1895, 326–327).

The style clearly recalls the one of a manifesto, polemically written against *The Badminton Library* ('I cannot forget that the first guide to whom I was ever roped ... possessed ... more knowledge of mountains than is to be found even in the Badminton library', *ibid.*, 324). To Dent's book, however, contributed also prominent figures of the Alpine Club itself (Conway, Freshfield, Bonney, Whymper, etc.); and therefore it is evident that Mummery's critique was also directed at the so-called Alpine Club 'orthodoxy', while giving the impression of rescuing the original ethos of its founders. If Girdlestone's defence of climbing

without guides was seen as a heresy (Fig. 6.2), Mummery's new '*raison d'être* of mountaineering' was an entirely different religion.

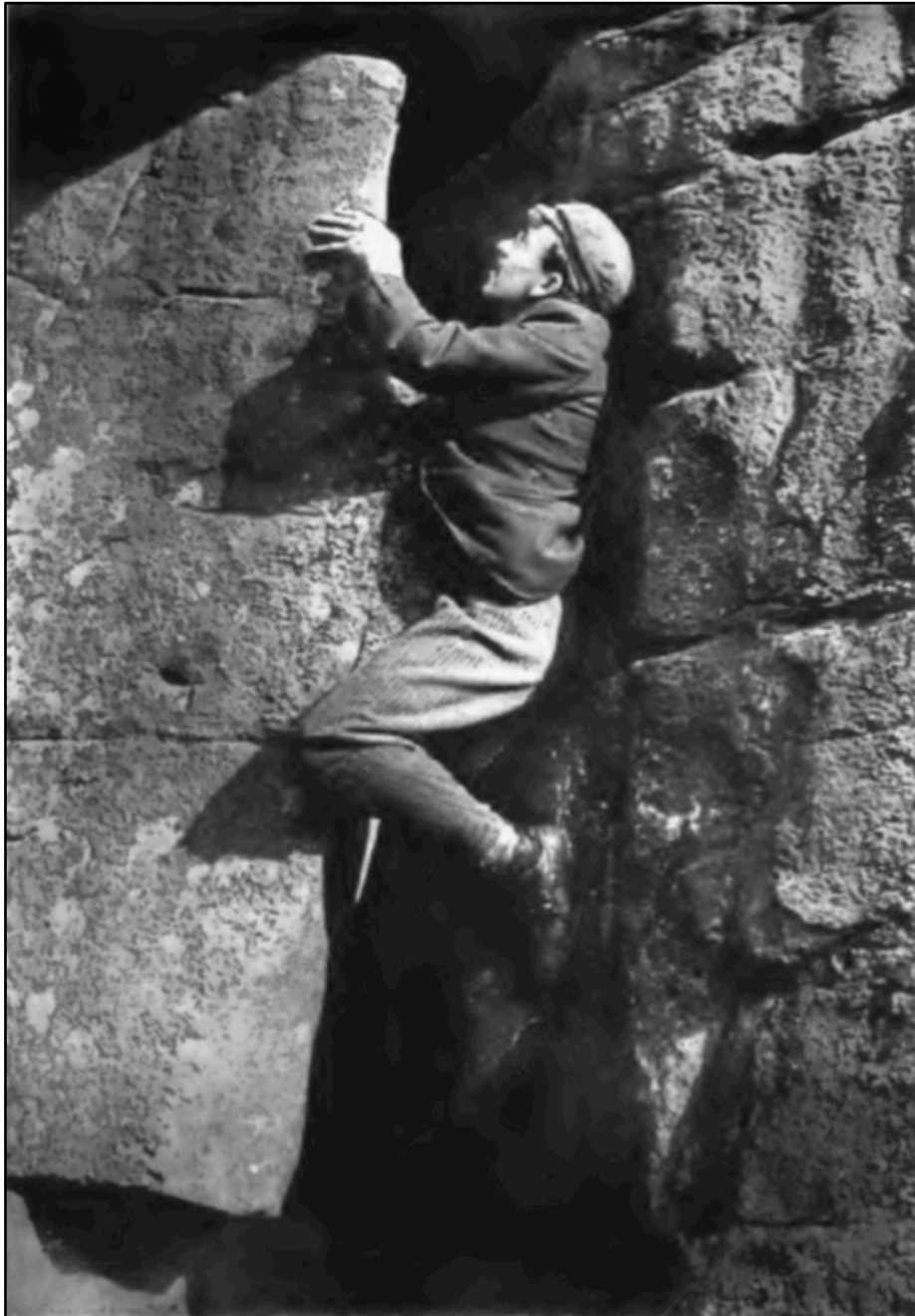


Fig. 6.2 - An example of the 'Back and Knee Method' of climbing a narrow chimney; the photo shows a characteristic attitude of Owen Glynne Jones: he is portrayed alone (no guide) and without ropes. Photo: George D. Abraham (Abraham 1907, 56).

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Fig. 6.3 – Otto Barth, *The Modern Style of Mountaineering*, in Zsigmondy 1885.

However, it is rarely mentioned in British scholarship that the new style of mountaineering that this passage implicitly endorsed found its roots in the German mode of climbing, following the examples of Emil and Otto Zsigmondy (Fig. 6.3), Ludwig Purtscheller, and the best pupils of Eugen Guido Lammer, such as Georg Winkler, or Robert Hans Schmitt (Gasparetto 2012, 24–26; Lutz

2002; Walkner 1996). Georg Müller, in 1922, would embed this direct and solitary engagement with the mountain in militaristic terms: 'struggle is everywhere in the mountains ... The essence of the Alpine world is struggle ... We seek the battle and are glad to find it in the mountains' (Müller 1922, 7; Wilms 2012, 274; see, for a different interpretation, Felsch 2009). This struggle with mountains epitomized in fact the 'art of rock climbing' itself, which found its new privileged 'playground' in the Dolomites. British mountaineers climbing in the Dolomites found themselves in a direct contact with the new style of alpinism practiced, for instance, by Georg Winkler and Paul Grohmann (Grohmann 1877; Richardi 2008).

The closest example in Britain of this kind of practice is to be found in rock-climbing as common in the Peak or Lake Districts (Westaway 2013). The historiography of mountaineering tends to lean on the upper middle class and its contribution to the history of mountaineering from the peaks of the European Alps. But as Tebbutt (2006) critically illustrates, the upland terrain of Britain, such as that found in the Peak District, also reinforced the notion of middle-class masculinity and perpetuated the broader national symbolism that required men to dominate nature through the emergence of regional rambling and other local walking organizations, from the 1880s onwards, particularly in the confined urban and industrial regions within easy reach of the 'wild' outdoors.

Such an opening up of domestic wildernesses, including the Lake District, allowed, in fact, more working-class integration within such rambling movements on a local level, being a 'rational alternative to the aggressive physicality of some working-class culture' (*ibid.*, 1153). Interestingly, Jonathan Westaway points to the importance of the immigrant German community in Manchester 'who became key players in the formation of middle-class cultural institutions in the industrial city' and 'progressively' influenced 'the

development of a distinctive regional mountaineering culture in northern England' (Westaway 2009, 571; 584). The development of mountaineering in the Peak or Lake District (Westaway 2013), however, introduced a significant variant in the Alpine Club orthodoxy. If earlier members of the Alpine Club were mainly 'ice-men', used to climb the highest peaks of the Western Alps, in the company of at least one skilful guide, later members, keen to climb the peaks of Britain, were in fact 'cragmen' (Fig. 6.4), used to perform their exploits alone or in the company of a friend. George Dixon Abraham (1871-1965) and Ashley Perry Abraham (1876-1951), known in mountaineering circles as the 'Keswick Brothers', introduced the new style also to the Alps – notably in the Dolomite Mountains:

Surprise is very often expressed at the continued neglect of Dolomite climbing by the British followers of the sport. Various reasons have been given; but I venture to think that the real cause has not been generally recognised. These peaks appeal to the rock-climber, pure and simple; they are practically devoid of serious glacier and snow practice. These remarks apply equally well to our own British mountains. Cragmen who know our homeland rocks intimately and realise their opportunities, feel small attraction for the far-distant peaks. This idea is constantly fostered by those of our own country men who have tasted of the joys of the Dolomites; with few exceptions, they scarcely ever repeat the experience. It used to be the height of my ambition to visit the Dolomites with the late Owen Glynne Jones, but he always said "No! I will never go again"; we have plenty of rock-climbing at home! (Abraham 1907, 460).

The refusal to go to the Dolomites of Owen Glynne Jones (1867-1899, see McConnell 2004c), with the Abraham brothers, two of the pioneers of mountaineering in the Lake District (Jones 1900; Fig. 6.2), is less connected to the Dolomites themselves than with his resistance against the protocols of the Alpine Club, and perhaps also with his own experience in the Western Alps –

certainly less congenial to his style of climbing. Jones would return to the Alps (although never, for whatever reason, in the Dolomites) to find his death at the age of 32, in a climbing accident on the Ferpècle Arête of the Dent Blanche in Switzerland (Gos 1948, 256–269). Owen Glynne Jones, the ‘Keswick Brothers’ and, in addition to them, also Walter Parry Haskett Smith, author of *Climbing in the British Isles* (Haskett Smith 1894–95), certainly contributed to change the image of mountaineering in Britain (Fig. 6.4). The way they changed it was not by capitalizing on the sensational and exotic exploits of the Golden Age, but through a different discourse of ‘self-identity and exceptionalism’ now attached to British rock-climbing alone (Westaway 2013, 155).

The typical Alpine Club member was an alpinist, and as an alpinist he had to demonstrate his prowess in the Alps. The Alps, and in particular the Western and Swiss Alps, were granting the sportive practice of mountaineering an aura of gentility (Hansen 1995, 310). He was not just conquering a peak previously unclimbed; he was in fact climbing mountains with a prestigious pedigree – mountains whose worthiness had been praised by previous illustrious generations. By conquering their peaks, British mountaineers were satisfying their need of ‘being elsewhere’ (Baranowski and Furlough 2001), without being haunted by the ‘spectre of belatedness’ (Schoina 2009, 97; Behdad 1994; Buzard 1993b, 106). They were enjoying the feeling of being the first to ‘touch’ what others had only dared to ‘watch’; their prestige derived part from the scenery already known and part from a scenery that they made new. Hence the rigorous control exerted by members of the Alpine Club on who was admitted to and excluded from sharing that cultural capital; the Alpine Club orthodoxy was in fact a matter of social distinction.

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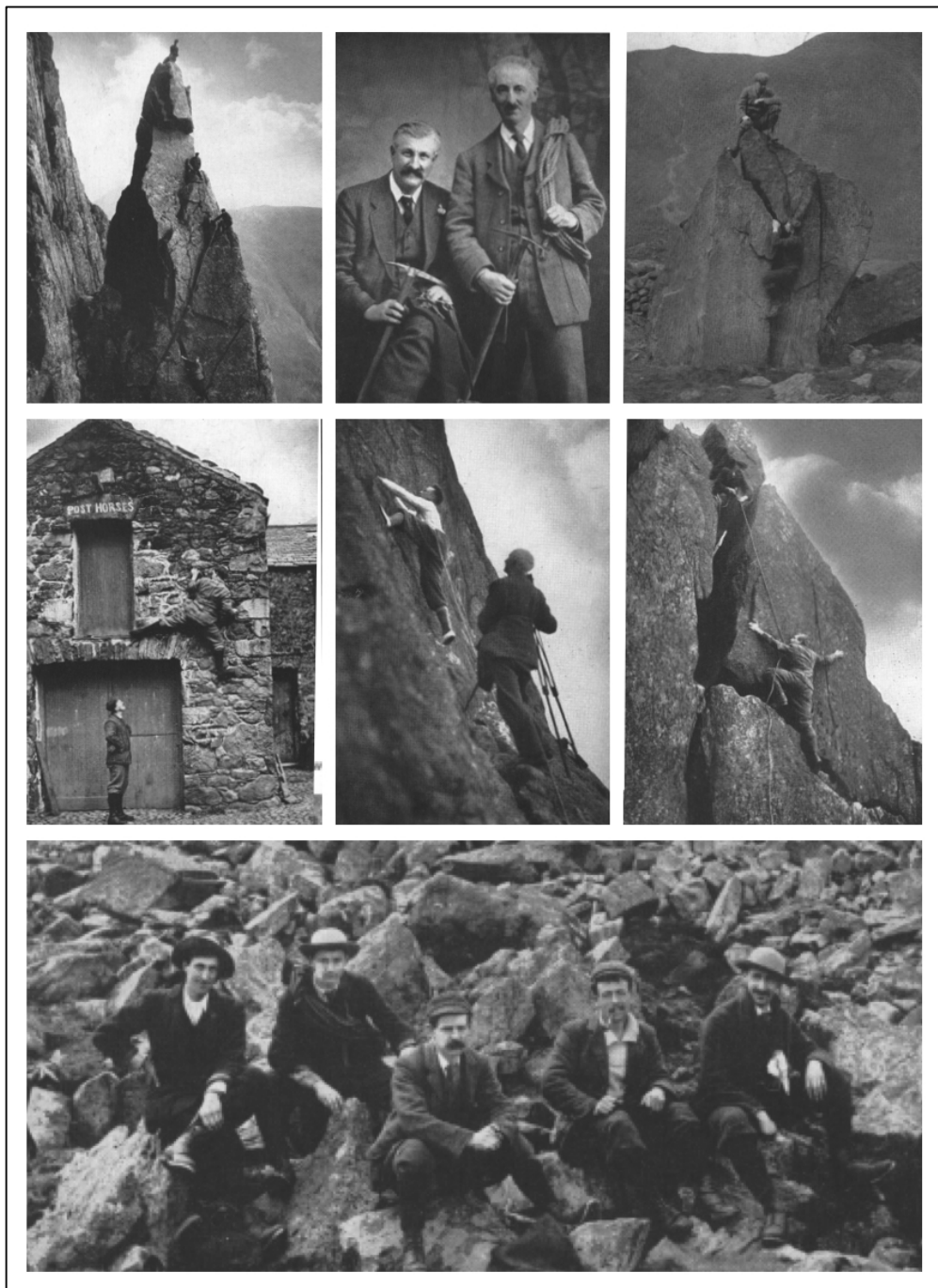


Fig. 6.4 - The Napes Needle, Lake District, 1886; The 'Keswick Brothers', George D. and Ashley P. Abraham; The 'Y' Boulder at Wasdale Head, Lake District; Dr Collier on the Barndoor Traverse, Wasdale Head, Lake District; G.D. Abraham with his camera on Gimmer Crag, Lake District; The Milestone Buttress, North Wales; Group of cragsmen on Cader Idris, North Wales, 1897 (from left: A.P. Abraham, C. Fox, D.J. Williams, O.G. Jones, and G.D. Abraham), Alpine Club Archive, London.

All this was gone towards the end of the century, when British mountaineers started neglecting the Alps seeking for alternative peaks to climb in Asia or

America – ‘where the map is still blank’ (Ellis 2001, 17–51). In one of his late and less known articles, Leslie Stephen expressed his views on Martin Conway’s (1856-1937, see Hansen 2004) *Climbing and Exploration in the Karakoram-Himalayas* (1894a) with an ostensibly beguiling title: ‘A Substitute for the Alps’ (Stephen 1894). As the reader soon becomes aware, however, his title announced in fact a bitter review.² It is difficult to establish whether Stephen’s bitterness derived from his envy towards an alpinist of the new generation, exploring territories hitherto unknown and untrodden, or, more plausibly, from his nostalgia for a time in which that unknowingness and untroddenness were to be found in the Alps. The Himalaya and the Andes were rapidly becoming the new frontier for the members of the Alpine Club – a new and exciting frontier that threatened to deteriorate the very spirit of British mountaineering:

In the good old days an Alpine expedition meant a walk from a comfortable inn, a stiff climb or so up a peak of reasonable size, at the outside, perhaps, a night passed in a *châlet* or possibly on the rocks, and then a return with heightened appetite to a good *table d’hôte*, and a delicious evening talk, in which we recounted our performance with such modesty as we could command to like-minded friends (*ibid.*, 464).

That spirit was captured, as Douglas Freshfield had pictured it, by the image of a British middle-class tourist ‘out on a holiday and in a holiday humour’, dashing ‘from peak to peak, from group to group, even from one end of the Alps to the other’, in search of ‘the best of air, a dash of adventure, and a love of nature’ (Freshfield 1875, 181–183). The main activities, ‘climbing’ and ‘exploring’, that Conway announced in his title and later reiterated in the reports of his deeds in Latin America, *The Bolivian Andes: A Record of Climbing and Exploration in the Cordillera Real in the Years 1898 and 1900* (1901) and *Aconcagua and Tierra del Fuego: A Book of Climbing, Travel and Exploration* (1902), were sufficient to challenge that holiday mood.

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The size of the new mountains, the outlandishness of their location, the expenses of the expeditions and the number of guides and porters needed to assist the alpinist of the 'new school' in 'climbing' and 'exploring' those far off territories were betraying not only that spirit but the very idea of mountain scenery that the alpinist of the 'old school' used to admire in the Alps – that picturesque mountain scenery that only the combination of nature and civilization could provide:

Can K2, or Masherbrum, or any of his nameless compeers, be really as beautiful? The argument in their favour is plausible: they are taller than Mont Blanc; they have bigger precipices; longer ranges of peaked 'needles'; they command wider horizons; they send down avalanches by the score, each of them big enough to cover a whole Swiss valley; the sunset lights up their snows, and the clouds wreath round their ridges in colours as bright and forms as delicate as are ever to be seen nearer home. That proves that if they were in Switzerland they would be beautiful. But can they be beautiful where they are? (Stephen 1894, 465).

In rejecting that 'plausible' argument, Stephen rejected the idea that the Himalayas and the Andes could indeed constitute a suitable 'substitute for the Alps'. To be perfectly beautiful, those 'noble giants' were missing a set of scenic ingredients that the 'old school' of mountaineering attached to a picturesque view carefully composed in centuries of literary and pictorial descriptions of the Alps.

The Asian and American mountains could strike the viewer only as rough stones that needed to be properly polished to be truly beautiful:

What these noble giants want is not simply that somebody should go and look at them. That can be done, as Mr. Conway has found, at a sufficient cost of time and money, of aching limbs and gasping lungs. But they require also to be enamelled by all that can only come with centuries of civilization. They want to have picturesque villages and church spires in

their valleys; to have zigzag paths traced up their sides by the feet of succeeding generations; to have chalets built on the pastures, and terraced fields creeping up their sides; to be everywhere, in short, made into the framework of a congenial human society. Our ancestors, at whom we sometimes sneer, took their scenery more reasonably perhaps than we do (*ibid.*).

In contrast to those 'noble giants', was the picturesque scenery of the Alps cast in the 'framework of a congenial human society' that Stephen missed in those views.³ Only a deluded mind could think of taking pleasure 'in the absolute negation of human sympathy' or in 'savagery, pure and simple', like the 'deathly solitudes of the moon' – 'I like my scenery properly aired; tamed and softened by the labours of my fellows, or at least standing out in harmonious contrast to human works' (*ibid.*, 466).

Stephen's comments read like a set of instructions to compose a picturesque landscape scenery. Similar instructions, in a more explicit form, featured significantly in the sections devoted to photography included with increasing frequency in popular guidebooks to the Alps. In Sydney Spencer's article, 'Photography in the High Alps', included in Ball's *Hints and Notes Practical and Scientific for Travellers in the Alps* (Ball 1899, 133–150), for instance, advice is given also with regard of the subject to chose, suggesting to consider photographing a mountain landscape in cloudy days and to carefully frame the foreground for greater effect (*ibid.*, 138); similar hints are also to be found in Clinton T. Dent's concluding chapter on photography in *The Badminton Library* book on *Mountaineering* (1892, 412), and in his article on 'Alpine Scenery' in the *Art Journal* (Dent 1890), with several models provided for inspiration. Overall, the picturesque mould proved to be difficult to be supplanted (Ackerman 2003), despite Conway's recommendation to his illustrator, Arthur David McCormick (1860-1943), to portray mountains in their bare gigantic outlook.

In Freshfield's comment, the old view of 'mountain gloom' is recycled to propose a posthumous manifesto of 'mountain glory' (Nicolson 1963). Conway's expedition coincided with the end of an era and its date could be easily taken as the endpoint of a mountaineering tradition still attached to the 'picturesque voyage' (Haywood 2008; Trott 1999; Scaramellini 1996; Whale 1994; Copley and Garside 1994). The comparison between the Alps and the Himalayas makes clear that for Stephen 'mountain gloom' could be transformed into 'mountain glory' only by the acknowledgement of the picturesque character of the former against the unbearable sublimity of the latter: 'the wilderness of the Rocky Mountains or the Karakoram, would, I fear, make me shiver' and 'K2, vaguely standing in the wilderness, in a dim region between three empires, would, I suspect, suggest the ominous and the monstrous, and even the sublimity would pass into the horrible' (Stephen 1894, 466).⁴ Historically speaking, the passage from 'gloom' to 'glory' or from 'hate' to 'love' was afforded, according to Stephen, by the advancements in science combined with the aesthetic ascendancy of the picturesque (Stephen 1871, 53).

Picturing the Picturesque

The Lake District acted as the English geographical matrix for the establishment of picturesque landscape (Rutherford 2013; Bicknell 1990; Andrews 1989b, 153–196; Moseley 1986; Nicholson 1955). Through the works of Ruskin, Turner and Wordsworth, the region became the archetypal subject of an English gaze that would transform the Dolomite region into a scenario of picturesque views. Through picturesque art, this gaze inscribed into Dolomite representations a distinct English 'character', incubated, nursed and cherished away from the Alpine region. The geography of the Lakes acted as both the aesthetic background and the sentimental foreground to transform the 'Venetian Alps' into the 'Dolomites' – a transformation that would replace the classical and

religious subjects of Titian's paintings with the romantic and picturesque elements of Turner's landscapes. This is what I call here the 'Dolomite picturesque', as an important component of the Silver Age of mountaineering.

The epochal nature of the picturesque movement emerged from eighteenth century debates about English gardening, including the landscape designs of Humphrey Repton (1752-1818; Daniels 1999); but soon became an aesthetic movement in its own right which fused the pictorial appreciation and representation of nature in poetry, painting, gardening, architecture and the art of travel into a single art of landscape (Ross 1987). The picturesque became a universal mode of vision that particularly emphasised the primacy of pictorial values; here, therefore, the topic will be considered mainly from an artistic point of view. The term itself first appeared in the Reverend William Gilpin's (1724-1804) *An Essay on Prints* (1768), but it is generally accepted that Sir Uvedale Price (1747-1829) and Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824) defined its character and purpose more fully. Price classified the picturesque through the three criteria of roughness, irregularity and sudden variation: 'yet his theory did not explain why we should find the picturesque agreeable' (Ross 1987, 278), addressing rather unsatisfactorily the narrow issue of garden improvements. Knight's attempt, instead, was 'grounded in more complex and ambitious theory of perception' and hoped to 'construct a fully-fledged theory of taste' (*ibid.*, 275) that ran parallel to the changing fashions (Price 1965).

In a general sense, the picturesque provided basic rules for 'looking at a picture' or at a scene 'suitable for painting' (Townsend 1997, 365) that exclusively involved some kind of nature, unified a humanity and natural beauty through art: according to Hunt, 'whether it took the form of framed picture or ceiling decoration, a drama or a garden, [the picturesque] should represent some significant human action; that all the parts or ornaments of that painting should contribute to the whole' (Hunt 1992, 115). Literally the picturesque

became a 'picturing' process. Townsend (1997) argues that the development of the picturesque sees it emerging from neo-classical, neo-Arcadian ideas of the eighteenth century that required art, landscape and aesthetic theories (and landscape art) to build upon the imitation of nature in order to exemplify true 'Nature', even if this involved external improvement and human inputs to a scene through an manufactured idealization process. Tolia-Kelly agrees that the picturesque grew out of the seventeenth-century ideal landscape (Tolia-Kelly 2007, 332), becoming an aesthetic movement theorized and systematized in its own right, which re-embraced classical culture at the same time as it 'celebrated nature's wild textures and forms' (*ibid.*). The process of picturesque 'relandscaping', as Wendy Joy Darby maintains, meant that the human sphere of houses and gardens began to 'conform to the contrived naturalness of [a] classical genre of painting', meaning that the 'distinctions between reality and representation were blurred' (Darby 2000, 28). These meanings became an 'ultimate reality' and 'even more naturalized because they no longer [appeared] to derive from an artistic scene composted by a subject, an author or artist, but from the physical reality itself' (Olwig 1993, 319)

The juxtaposition of the picturesque with the sublime is also significant. In some ways, the sublime gives meaning and distinctiveness to the picturesque. The sublime, according to Burke (1998), finds its beauty manifested through displays of nature in all its power, infinity and awesomeness. Rational beauty, the opposite of the sublime, is found instead in harmony and order. The picturesque fits between rational and sublime beauty, but remains a subcategory of the beautiful. It is not the opposite of the sublime as often thought; rather it occupies an intermediate ground. As we have seen in Chapter 1, it is less important to rehearse here in detail the theoretical discourse surrounding the picturesque as aesthetic category, but to focus, instead, on elements that emerged in that discourse as paradigmatic vehicles of picturesque

feelings; elements that became, during the nineteenth century, autonomous carriers of picturesque landscape compositions during the travel experience. James Buzard rightly insists in dubbing the entire nineteenth century up to the beginning of World War I, as an age marked by the 'longevity of the picturesque' (Buzard 1993b, 15–16).

In this sense, Scaramellini defines the picturesque in comparison with the sublime, arguing that the picturesque substitutes the vast dimensions of the sublime in nature with irregularity, and the emotions based on sublime awe are replaced by sensual curiosity and the 'pleasure of chromatic variations' (Scaramellini 1996, 53). The picturesque substitutes a catalogue of unrelated sublime objects with harmonic perspectives and picturesque compositions of the whole, 'creating thus situations in which the powerful and raw emotion is muffled by grace' (*ibid.*). The picturesque introduces figures and caricatures into the represented scenery not only to enhance the graphic quality of the picture, but also to 'instil life in scenes otherwise too severe or repulsive' (*ibid.*). Scenes considered too grandiosely sublime were therefore reduced to more 'human' scales and perspectives through quotations of 'vernacular origin', 'sketches' of local colour, and 'iconographic references to the collective imagination' or to anecdote (*ibid.*). In this reduction to a human scale, women participated influentially in the consolidation of the picturesque as the privileged gaze associated with travelling (Buzard 1993b, 16).

The picturesque developed through the eighteenth and consolidated through nineteenth centuries conveyed a certain domestic nobility to commonplace landscapes: 'Irregularity and form variety, interplay of planes, lights and shadows are stressed; small figurines of shepherds and wanderers, peasants and hunters, ladies and countrywomen, travellers, and painters, sailboats and carts, beasts of burden and domestic or wild animals are introduced, in marginal locations, to enliven scenes that would have been too

solemn, and lend local colouring to otherwise anonymous situations or landscapes' (Scaramellini 1996, 54). Tolia-Kelly, again, reminds us that the picturesque in landscape art framed, composed even, the roughness and drama of natural landscapes within a 'timeless' perspective (2007, 332); this was, as we have amply discussed in Chapter One, most famously conveyed through the fusion of Claude Lorrain's classical landscapes, Nicolas Poussin's heroic landscapes and Salvator Rosa's fantastic landscapes. Framed with the aesthetic category of the picturesque, domestic and foreign landscapes became 'culturally valued commodities purveyed in art, poetry and literature' (Darby 2000, 53); as taste for foreign mountain landscapes accelerated, ideas such as the Dolomite picturesque could be packaged-up, transported and naturalized domestically through the capture of it in various media. Elijah Walton's art will provide a case in point.

Tolia-Kelly suggests that Claude's paintings 'reflect the drama of nature through the use of scale; often, contrasts between light and dark are reduced to create a sense of distance' (*ibid.*). This idea of distance also spurs a significant debate within the picturesque conception, which emerged out of this type of landscape art. Townsend notes, for example, that while the formulation of the picturesque 'leads to a much more important and coherent way of understanding the environment as an aesthetic object', its appreciation 'inevitably produces distance, both literally and figuratively' (Townsend 1997, 369). For this reason, the picturesque also touches upon feelings of detachment and disinterestedness. The play between distant and close views could additionally enhanced through that particular technology of scale provided by Claude and Gray Glasses; if the former, as already discussed in Chapter 1, harmonized the chromatic effects of the landscape in the manner of Claude Lorrain, the latter choreographed the picture, erasing foreground details: 'Using this, the tourist could compose and reduce the large landscape into a neat,

manageable scale, whether just to view it and respond emotionally, or to record it in watercolours. The convexity miniaturised the reflected landscape' (Rutherford 2013, 217). Claude and Gray glasses allowed to 'picture' a landscape 'picturesquely' inserting distance into the observed scene as well as acting as physical barrier between landscape observed and the observer. So much had the picturesque transfiguration of landscape become 'an accepted feature of English life and art [that] gentlefolk in search of scenery carried the famed Claude glass – a rectangular, tinted mirror that deadened local colour in favour of evenness of tone' (Rees 1982, 256). Nature would appear to imitate art.

John Barrell sees this dimension enacted in the act of viewing the landscape art of John Constable (Barrell 1980). This act of viewing requires a physical distance from the portrayed subjects, in which the 'true harmony with nature seems to be available only to those who work the land or work on it; and from this the writer who describes, or the painter who depicts, is excluded, and reduced to envying a condition that he cannot attain ... the ideal of a harmonious society as it is admired and depicted in art is almost always now conceived of as somehow remote – whether, as usually in poetry, in the past, or, as in Constable's painting, in the distance' (Barrell 1980, 156; 1972). Accordingly, Tolia-Kelly (2007) rightly evokes a 'fear in paradise' in relation the picturesqueness of the Lake District, and similarly Macarthur (1997) refers to Ruskin's 'heartlessness of the picturesque'. But I would stress here that 'fear' and 'heartlessness', if we are ready to take them as instances of the sublime, are staged through the picturesque in domestic and controllable scenes – rather than 'in paradise', fear seems here to evoke the horror of a fairy tale (Teverson 2013; Helsinger 1982, 317), a kind of 'ecological sublime' (Hitt 1999) rendered familiar.

Politically and socially, and as a reaction to the encroachment of industrialisation, urbanisation and capitalism, 'the picturesque aesthetics of the picturesque tradition celebrated un-peopled landscapes, or, where there were people, they became part of nature and its rhythms' (Tolia-Kelly 2007, 333). William Wordsworth's engagement with the Lake District, for instance, expressed deep concern for 'the undesirable landscape changes that were taking place [in the Lakes] in the early nineteenth century' (Whyte 2000, 101). He elaborated a set of rules concerning vernacular Lake District architecture that conditioned style, colour and setting in a way that would minimize the detrimental impacts of change against what he thought were the quintessential picturesque qualities of the Lakes.

Wordsworth's criteria of natural beauty in his *Guide to the Lakes* (1810) fitted the picturesque model: 'the remarkable natural appearances of the Lake Country which Wordsworth praises and seeks to explain through analysis of nature's power and process are precisely those visual qualities of compositional unity and variety and irregularity of form and colour which had been regarded as the pre-eminent examples of picturesque effects in late eighteenth-century aesthetics' (Nabholtz 1964, 290). Wordsworth's picturesque, combined with the influential work of other romantics, namely Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Sir Walter Scott, came to dominate the style of British poetry that addressed 'landscape' in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century (Fulford 1996; Stempel 1971). Their concern was not pastoral or Arcadian, in the way the classical tradition of Claude Lorrain praised rustic settings populated by shepherds; 'but engaged with hills, lakes and rivers, downs and cliffs that were seen as emblematic of national identity' (Ackerman 2003, 78). But this picturesque engagement with landscape was still operated at a distance. In Wordsworth's magnum opus, *The Prelude*, posthumously published in 1850,

this engagement of the picturesque appears to be based on the 'superficiality of its focus on pictorial composition' (*ibid.*).

Ackerman's contention that the picturesque work of Wordsworth made of the Lakes an iconic national symbol links to Tolia-Kelly's argument that, through the picturesque, 'The English Lake District has, historically and contemporarily, been a site of the consolidation of an exclusive memorial to a sense of Englishness' (Tolia-Kelly 2007, 334). If the connection between the aesthetics of the picturesque and a geographical space, such as the Lakes, can result in the formation of national identity, it is possible to transplant this English way to conceptualise landscape to another landscape – the Dolomites – allowing us, at least heuristically, to unravel elements of Englishness from a landscape situated outside the boundaries of a national territory. By looking or gazing at the Dolomites through a particular English lens, picturing or highlighting picturesque elements that were characteristically English and distinct, say, from a French picturesque, one could postulate that the Dolomites contain or reveal components of Englishness. When Amelia Edwards labelled the Sasso di Ronch (see Chapter 4) – so similar, we could now add, to the Napes Needle in the Lake District (Westaway 2013, 173–175) – as 'primitive and picturesque', describing it as a subject that 'Poussin might have drawn, and Claude have coloured', it is safe to infer that the effect she had in mind was that of a scenery seen through a Claude or a Gray Glass.

If it is true, as Matless argues, that 'versions of landscape and Englishness [are] produced by more or less influential cultural movements' (Matless 1998, 14), and we agree that the picturesque was certainly an influential cultural movement, it is possible to discern in the English invention of the Dolomites a transnational or trans-territorial dimension to 'the ways in which practices, discursive or otherwise, constitute senses of time and space in relation to other events and practices, potentially generating contradictions' (*ibid.*, 20). The

picturesque promoted 'love for the ordinary agricultural countryside of Britain', but this did not necessarily 'signify an inability to appropriate the Alps or Bay of Naples' (Macarthur 1997, 128).

The most 'English' of English picturesque painters of the naturalist tradition was J.M.W. Turner (Vaughan 1990, 15). Turner travelled extensively to the various picturesque regions of England, Wales, and southern Scotland, including the Lake District, and further afield to Italy and the continent in 1802, liking 'best the sea [and] Venice', while, above all, being 'captivated by the Alps' (Rees 1982, 225). The extent to which Turner can be associated with the picturesque has been fully acknowledged by John Gage (Gage 1965a; 1965b). Turner's earlier work engaged with the staple of what was considered picturesque and contrasted antithetical landscapes within the same scene: 'rugged hills and gnarled trees were to be balanced by placid valleys and tranquil greenery, a juxtaposition that is also found in contemporary poetry' (Matteson 1980, 381), such as Wordsworth's, for instance. This juxtaposition was to be more dramatically demonstrated in his more sublime works, such as those discussed in Chapter 1.

Turner's rural landscape of *Llanthony Abbey* (Fig. 6.5), in the Tate Gallery, sees the development of the picturesque moving away from a composition of luxurious vegetation seen in the Arcadian art of Claude or Poussin, to present landscape as rocky and barren: 'While there are no figures present, there is evidence of human habitation', suggesting that Turner's landscapes of this kind 'conform to picturesque notions'; the 'watercolour's character is largely in accord with picturesque theory and practice' (Finley 1979, 152). This painting corresponds to the picturesque also because of its depiction of ruined architecture and fallen masonry, which was often paralleled with the picturesque qualities of 'natural ruins, such as trees, or more usually rock formations' (*ibid.*, 153). The picturesqueness of Turner, however, is usually

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associated with his earlier art, while the sublime was, in general terms, the recognisable element within his later work (Gage 1965a). In the mid-nineteenth century, changes in taste moved art away from the picturesque towards the romance of 'the more expressive and individualised, on the one hand, toward the more refined documentation on the other' (Ackerman 2003, 91).



Fig. 6.5 - J.M.W. Turner, *Llanthony Abbey, Wales*, 1794, Tate Gallery, London.

This 'decline' of the picturesque 'mentality' was partly due to Ruskin, who, in one sense reacted 'against the picturesque' (*ibid.*). Talking about the 'Turnerian Picturesque' in the fourth volume of *Modern Painters* (Ruskin 1903, 4: 9), Ruskin argues against the morally dubious satisfaction one could gain from a 'fallen cottage – desolate villa – deserted village – blasted heath – mouldering castle' or from 'poverty, darkness, and guilt', implying that this only meant picturing the inhabitants of a picturesque landscape as dwelling 'in helpless darkness [of an] untaught soul' (*ibid.*, 19). This suggested that picturesque

practice was somehow perverse, entailing a level of required sympathy. Forced compassion for the 'ragged misery of cottagers', argues Macarthur (1997, 130), or an essentially picturesque culture, forms Ruskin's core rhetoric in his 'heartlessness of the picturesque'. Ruskin differentiated, however, between this, the 'low picturesque', and that of the more noble 'Turnerian Picturesque'. Turner's more profound brand of picturesqueness, particularly of his Alpine views, 'thus knows that the cottage and mountain each reward his sensorium but knows, too, that they are not the same; the cottage is pathetic' (Macarthur 1997, 133). Lower picturesqueness required pathos, whereas, Turnerian picturesqueness, more honourably, called for empathy.

Ruskin's dual fanaticism for the art of Turner and for mountains, nonetheless, secured the Lakes and Alps as picturesque icons within English taste and sentiment. In terms of his geography, Ruskin's understanding of and displeasure with the picturesque emerges from the idea that his chief 'concern was with seeing rather than observing' as well as 'with an engagement with self and landscape' (Cosgrove 1979, 44), which clearly conflicted with 'picturesque taste [that] was so exclusively visual and so indifferent to political, social and moral issues' (Ackerman 2003, 91). In other words, the picturesque lacked a corporeal dimension, centring too much on the purely visual. Ruskin's problems with the picturesque are linked to Tolia-Kelly's further explanation that:

What is missing in the picturesque tradition is the idea of the dynamism of landscape and emotional values of the cultural landscape. In the picturesque landscape, the sovereignty of the viewer is enabled only through his or her looking with a particular stance ... the relationship between emotional responses to a scene and the form and aesthetics of representation are not of primary value (Tolia-Kelly 2007, 333).

The art of Elijah Walton and his Dolomite mountain views, discussed next, can be classified as picturesque. Owing to these debates around the emergence

and decline of the picturesque mentality, it is argued that Walton is both a product and victim of changing tastes in the Victorian period that led to the Ruskinian supremacy of more Turnerian and romantic art. Walton appealed to both 'the more expressive and individualised' as well as 'the more refined documentation' calls for picturesque landscape representation, as Ackerman (2003) would put it. The problem for Walton, however, was that that these two culminating expressions of the picturesque, seen in his Dolomite landscape views, were coupled with more the mainstream publication of imagery through chromolithography, Walton's appeal was jeopardized.

Picturing the Dolomites

Intersecting concerns over art, nature and science, the artistic representations of mountain landscapes, as argued so far, became heavily debated in Victorian Britain during both the Golden and Silver Ages of mountaineering. The mountain art of the Birmingham-born Elijah Walton (1832-1880; Wimbush 2004) is, perhaps undeservedly, neglected in today's artistic and academic circles; his picturesque views of the Dolomites provide a unique exemplification of this debate, which combined geological accuracy with romantic vision, and attempted to celebrate and interpret mountain scenery in line with prevailing, notably Ruskinian, philosophy and ways of seeing. Walton's work provides this chapter with the material source for understanding how the Victorian appreciation of the Dolomites can be clearly classified as picturesque, complementing the examples so far provided, including the travel writings of Amelia B. Edwards and the art criticism of Josiah Gilbert. The climber and photographer Douglas Milner, in his Dolomite book (1951), describes Walton's pictures as 'the most vivid representations of these mountains that have ever been achieved' (Ring 2000, 111).

Walton's art came to prominence in the mid-nineteenth-century world of London's Alpine Club; *The Alpine Club Register* confirms that Walton, in 1863, was the first to qualify for the Club membership on artistic grounds alone, rather than for mountaineering exploits (Mumm 1923, 364); Ruskin himself became a member only six years later, in 1869. Often, however, the artists admitted in the Alpine Club were also mountaineers, such as Edward Whymper, Alfred Wills and William Conway, who was more of an art historian than a painter; Walton, together with E. T. Coleman, Edward Theodore Compton, Arthur Croft and George Barnard, was one of the few professional painters admitted during that period (Hansen 1991, 117). During the sixties, the Alpine Club seemed to orient itself away from painting as a medium to represent alpine scenery to embrace, instead, photography (*ibid.*, 245).

It was through Walton's collaboration and friendship the Rev. Thomas George Bonney (1833-1923; Oldroyd 2004), later president of the Alpine Club (1881-1883), however, which secured Walton's career as mountain-oriented artist: 'The texts that Bonney wrote for seven of Walton's ten illustrated books give a clear indication of their shared interests which were representative of the empirical mood of culture and society in mid-nineteenth century Britain' (Astill 2003, 152). A Cambridge academic, mountaineer, geologist and prolific writer, Bonney travelled frequently with Walton to the Alps, where he would climb and his companion would sketch, gathering material for their joint publications. In reviewing collectively Bonney's *Outline Sketches in the High Alps of Dauphiné* (1865) and Walton and Bonney's *The Peaks and Valleys of the Alps* (1868), *The Alpine Journal* praised both but in different terms:

The traveller who visit that inhospitable region will often be indebted to Mr Bonney for knowing the names of peaks, and the real relation of passes. Mr Walton, on the contrary, is a painter, and not a geographer. He has the sense to see, what very few artists will see, that the peaks have a

meaning in their forms, and that wilfully to alter those forms is to destroy the meaning; and consequently he is more faithful in his mountain outlines than the vast majority of painters. But still his subjects are chosen for pictorial effect, which is often inconsistent with topographical clearness; and his constant practice of shrouding part of the view in mist renders this especially marked. More geographical knowledge may be acquired from studying one of Mr Bonney's plates than from Mr Walton's whole series (George 1867, 205–206).

Together, they embraced new publishing techniques, like chromolithography, and aspired to adorn, through this affordable medium, the walls of the middle-classes with Alpine sceneries. Chromolithography allowed mass-produced copies of Walton's art to be available for 'wider distribution and use' (W. Vaughan 1990, 18), which ultimately, however, happened to saturate the market leading to Walton's professional and critical demise.

Nonetheless, at the peak of his career Walton demonstrated the pride in his then confirmed success and 'a spirit of civic philanthropy and altruism by the gift of three paintings to the newly opened Birmingham Art Gallery' (Astill 2003, 153). These large paintings, all views of the Dolomites, were exhibited along with 131 other Dolomite watercolours at the German Gallery on New Bond Street in 1867 (*The Morning Post* 1867, 7). The context was the one of the so-called 'commercial galleries', a cultural as well as economic phenomenon that promoted nineteenth-century London 'as the site for the development of the modern retail market in fine art' (Fletcher and Helmreich 2011, 1). The cosmopolitan dimension of New Bond Street, reflected in the names of the artistic 'shops' that opened their doors along its sidewalks (together with the German Gallery, also the French Gallery, Belgian Gallery, Japanese Gallery, Netherlands Gallery, Dutch Gallery, Continental Gallery, including a Salon Parisien), transformed the West End, as Pamela Fletcher perceptively argued,

‘to sound a little like a travel itinerary ... a kind of Grand Tour on Bond Street’ (Fletcher 2011, 142).

In this context, Walton’s exhibition was exploiting in a remarkable pioneering way the success of Gilbert and Churchill’s illustrated Dolomites book, published only in 1864; although already in 1865, W.D. Howard and F.H. Lloyd privately published a photo-book whose title clearly recycled Gilbert and Churchill’s one, *Photographs Among the Dolomite Mountains* (1865). In a letter to the Birmingham Gallery, accompanying his donation, Walton remarked:

These paintings are the largest and most important works I have produced, and I wish to present them to my native town as an acknowledgement of the aid and encouragement I received from the kind friends there in my youth, and of my obligations to the School of Art in New Street. If these paintings be the means of encouraging the young students to persevere in an art so truly elevating to the mind, I shall be glad indeed ... if the council accept them ... I would add that it would be well, if possible, to put glass before the pictures, in order to preserve them from the damaging influence of dust and smoke unavoidable in a manufacturing town (Langford 1871, 65).

The mayor, Thomas Avery, in reply, gratefully accepted these ‘valuable’ paintings, and recognised Walton’s ‘noble’ and ‘generous’ gift to the town (*ibid.*). Despite the inaccuracies in the spelling of Italian toponymy, *The Art Journal* further commented:

By the generosity of Mr. Elijah Walton, who is so well known by his transcripts of Alpine scenery ... the Gallery has been put in possession of three grand pictures, representing mountain-peaks in the Alps. These consist of representations of ‘Monte Marmoroto (sic), seen from Val d’Auronzo, Italy,’ ‘Monte Tofana, seen from above Artine d’Ampezza (sic), Tyrol,’ and ‘Monte Civita’. Those familiar with the marvellous power of Mr. Walton’s pencil will have no difficulty in realising in imagination the

grandeur united with the beauty which reigns over the canvas in his representations of these regions of the avalanche, ribbed ice, and snow; the sunny glow on snowy peaks, the peaceful beauty of lakes slumbering at their base, 'beauty in the lap of terror' (*The Art Journal* 1868, 121).

Of these three large paintings – their dimensions reach nine feet by six – only one remains today in Birmingham's collection: *Monte Civetta* (Fig. 6.6), which has been only recently reinstated in the public rooms from storage (Stewart and Glowacki 2008, 195); the painting clearly evokes Gilbert's illustration of *Monte Civita* in *The Dolomite Mountains* (Fig. 4.5). The identification of Walton's subjects – *Monte Marmarolo, seen from the Auronzo Valley*; *Monte Tofana, seen from Cortina d'Ampezzo*; and *Monte Civetta, seen the Lake of Alleghe* – allows us to unravel the milestones of his journey to the Dolomites, which chimes with the picturesque voyage, illustrated only a few years before, in Gilbert and Churchill's *The Dolomite Mountains* (1864); the titles of his paintings follow the conventions for writing the captions of a tourist guidebook. In his *Cadore or Titian's Country* (1869), Josiah Gilbert does not omit to mention the painting: 'Mr. Walton has painted a fine picture, of large size, of this mountain as seen from the lake' (Gilbert 1869, 117). Probably, the donation of the three large oil paintings to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery has less to do with the painter's generosity than with the difficulty of placing these large-scale scenes on the 'commercial' art market.

Clearly executed for a spacious exhibition space, these paintings contrast with the significantly smaller size of the exhibited watercolours as well as of the chromolithographs found in Walton and Bonney's illustrated books. The ambition of these publications was, however, no less grand than Walton's massive painted canvases. Of these illustrated books, two publications, *The Peaks and Valleys of the Alps* (1868) and *Peaks in Pen and Pencil for Students of Alpine Scenery* (1872), have become key texts in mountaineering literature, but

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provide, in addition, important contributions to the way in which the Dolomites could be artistically represented and understood as picturesque.



Fig. 6.6 - Elijah Walton, *Monte Civetta seen from the Lake of Alleghe*, and details, 1867, oil on canvas, 227x322cm, Birmingham Museums and Galleries. Compare it with Fig. 4.5.

Walton's imagery and Bonney's text reveal their Ruskinian leanings. Again, in line with the prevailing art criticism of the day, as discussed in the previous chapter, Bonney often, and unsurprisingly, references Ruskin's *Modern Painters* and couches their collaboration within Ruskin's rhetoric. In the introduction to *Peaks and Valleys* he advises the readers in this way:

Let it, however, be remembered that, though the pictures are contained in a book, they are not meant to be looked at like engravings, but as pictures – a distance of about three yards will be the best standpoint for most persons. Perhaps also I ought to apologize for quoting so freely from Mr. Ruskin's works. My excuse must be that no one, whose writings are known to me, understands the Alps better than he, or can describe them in such apt and eloquent words. If his fourth volume of "Modern Painters" were more studied, we should have fewer of those caricatures of Nature which now, under the names of "Scenes in the Alps," too often disfigure our Exhibitions (Walton and Bonney 1868, 8).

Bonney's sentiments seem to resonate with the better-known mountain bias of Ruskin's *Of Mountain Beauty*, which found 'the increase in the calculable sum of elements of beauty to be steadily in proportion to the increase of mountainous character' (Ruskin 1903, 6: 420).

Such a crescendo of beauty was captured by, among other things, the superior 'loveliness' of alpine flora, and, importantly, a firm adherence to truth in nature, best demonstrated, according to Ruskin, by Turner's artistic freedom and, of course, 'mystery'. If 'it was Turner's combination of minute observation and Romantic expression that was Walton's greatest influence' (Astill 2003, 155), Bonney makes reference even to Walton mirroring Turner's bodily actions in his positioning himself next to the funnel of their steam-ship during a heavy storm: 'My companion E. Walton, whose enthusiasm for his art renders him proof to most of the minor miseries of life, could not find it in his heart to leave such studies of storm-clouds, sea and mountain, and even succeeded, by propping himself against the funnel, in making useful pencil sketches' (*ibid.*). Similarly in a letter to Ruskin, 'it was reported that Turner claimed he had in fact lashed himself to the mast of the boat during the snowstorm'; a moment that would be considered inspirational for one of Turner's most sublime work, *Ariel*, in which he 'sought to reproduce the experience of incomprehensibility in

his observer, enabling painting to suggest and mystify as well as represent' (Wettlaufer 2000, 158).

But despite Walton's ability to display sublimity, picturesqueness and geological accuracy in his Alpine art, he was not popularly considered to be of Turner's quality; at his best, he could have been appreciated only as a Turnerian mannerist. In this sense, critics made references to his ability to paint wonderful scenes shrouded by fog and haze, but they also lamented a certain degree of repetitiveness: 'Unfortunately there is little to be said of it [i.e. his production of Alpine views]. Mr. Walton can paint a brilliant snow-peak or mountain mists better than anyone. But he is content to repeat year after year one or two effects' (Freshfield 1880, 302). Douglas Freshfield, establishing mountain art as a distinct sub-genre of landscape painting in an important article published in *The Alpine Journal*, lamented the little attention Walton paid in his pictures to the 'individual character [of] the various Alpine regions' (*ibid.*). Too Turnerian in their sublime grandiosity, his paintings were judged less convincing in their picturesque intimacy; to the Victorian gaze, increasingly attentive to picturesque details, they must have struck as too generic, despite the accuracy in reproducing the forms of mountain, as paintings able to evoke the numinous 'atmosphere' of the Alpine scenery but unable to reproduce its individual 'character'. Douglas Freshfield, for example, continued his criticism of Walton in *Italian Alps* (1875):

Mr. Elijah Walton, with too much feeling for colour, and occasionally for mountain form, seems to lack the force and perserverance necessary for the production of complete work. He seldom reaches the standard of rock-drawing held up in his own book, *Peaks in Pen and Pencil*. His sketches are too often scamped, and it is impossible to repress impatience of their mannerism, and of the perpetual bolt of mist which he is ever ready to throw in ... But he can, when he pleases, paint a truly and beautifully a dolomite pinnacle ... I still hope he is able to forget

some of his favourite effects, and to give us a series of simple transcripts of fresh impressions from nature (Freshfield 1875, 333).

Freshfield, instead, would appear to approve more of the art of the Geneva painter Gabriel Loppé (1825-1913, Fig. 6.7), who is so perfect in reproducing the picturesque effects of the Alpine 'wonderland', apparently, that

sometimes is the illusion that we should almost fear a modern version of Zeuxis and the birds, and expect to hear the lecturer calling his assistant to drive stakes into the canvas. When M. Loppé turns to summit views we feel that his success is complete. He has led the way ... and he has dared to be the first to depict the mysterious light of the far-off sunrise playing on the highest snows of Mont Blanc (Freshfield 1875, 343-344).

Freshfield's concern for mountain art, in fact, partly stems from his feeling that English artists lacked, domestically, the appropriate natural landscapes and light for a proper schooling in the discipline. Apart for Turner, who was capable of representing the 'majesty and poetry of the great ranges', Freshfield thought it best if English artists avoided 'hasty conclusions founded on imperfect knowledge, and attempt the mountains with the same energy and perseverance' which had made them the subject of their 'athletic youth' (Freshfield 1875, 335, 345). Freshfield's anxiety for the place of Alpine art in scholarship perhaps comes from a perception that it was associated with notions 'bad taste', which he argues against; he also attempts to elevate the genre through associating it with the backgrounds of Titian, and others like Perugino and Cima, the men who painted best 'as a rule the scenery of their own home' (*ibid.*, 335, 337).



Fig. 6.7 - Gabriel Loppé, *Agordo and Monte Framont, Belluno, Eastern Dolomites*, John Mitchell Fine Paintings, London.

Criticism levied upon Walton, however, must have been diffused in the artistic circles surrounding the Alpine Club if it is true that even his friend and collaborator, Bonney, in his obituary for Walton, could not refrain from mentioning that ‘professional critics Walton seldom pleased’, stating regretfully that ‘his difficulties were increased by the recent badness of the times, which affected seriously the sale of all works of art, and amongst them his drawings’ (Bonney 1882, 75). Still, in relation to Walton’s art, Bonney thought that ‘while its failings have been often indicated, its peculiar excellencies have been rarely recognised, and that he received during his life more unjust blame than praise ... it must be considered unfortunate also that he allowed so many of his drawings to be copied by chromo-lithography’ (*ibid.*, 75-77). Chromolithography, as the revolutionary technique that allowed for straightforward reproduction of images in colour, mechanised the diffusion of fine art pictures for the masses,

constituting the 'quintessence of the democratisation' of art (Kroes 2007, 59–60).

Part of the Victorian elite, however, increasingly saw in this 'chromo-civilization' the 'debasement of high-culture', dubbing the printing process as a 'pseudo-culture' that simply manufactured cheap copies of original oil paintings, 'destroying for the viewer the specialness of the original' (*ibid.*, 60). Despite these reservations, whose echoes one can clearly discern in Bonney's 'recent badness of the times', Walton's career was eventually tarnished by chromolithography and the mechanisation of publishing techniques. Walton was afterwards credited 'in retrospect ... with lowering the respectability of art reproductions and for presenting them as being of dubious taste, associated with the lower-middle classes', who could not easily afford original works of art (Astill 2003, 157-158).

Bonney remarked, nonetheless, that as Walton failed, Turner also failed because they both were attempting to graphically record the 'impossible' in nature: 'But even if colour be a more subjective matter than people commonly suppose, this is not the case with drawing' (Bonney 1882, 76). Walton's quality, according to his friend and collaborator, was his strong knowledge of 'how to draw a rock' – which was 'in some respects better even than Turner's' (*ibid.*). By 1900, a review of the Alpine Club's winter exhibition in *The Alpine Journal* provides evidence that Walton's impact had been subsequently revised since the criticism he received during his lifetime, elevating him, like Bonney had attempted to do in his time, to a level akin to Turner:

But we must admit that if so far we have produced many talents the genius is yet to come. No successor of Turner or even of Elijah Walton has yet appeared on our walls, no one with the power of grasping mountain scenery as a whole, of painting its atmosphere as well as its forms ('The Winter Exhibition' 1901, 372).

This changing attitude, between blame and praise, towards Walton's works chimes with the ambiguity surrounding the discourses of the time involving the elevation and deflation of the picturesque aesthetic movement, including Ruskin's own hotly debated Turnerian picturesqueness.

Walton's Dolomite views tried to fit the mould of taste in the rapidly changing market of the late Victorian era. Italy, it is argued, of all the foreign countries, 'exerted the greatest hold on the imagination of British artists and gallery-going public' and, in the late nineteenth century, drew 'a large number of professional artists [who] were known for their devotion to Italian subjects. So much a staple of British watercolour did the landscape of Italy [became] that certain parts of the Italian Alps ... immediately familiar to an audience who for the most part had never left Britain' (Wilcox and Newall 1992, 58–59).

In one sense, Walton was fashionable in satisfying picturesque conventions while focusing his efforts on subject matter and locations he knew were popular; yet, at the same time, he went beyond the 'straightjacket' of the picturesque. Despite the frequent and perhaps not entirely unjustified accusations of repetitiveness, he produced a highly iconic account of the Dolomite landscape, which 'combined topographical accuracy with poignant and evocative effects of light and atmosphere' (*ibid.*, 59). While we must take into account his undoubted partiality towards his friend, Bonney confirms that Walton 'delighted in atmospheric effects, both in the brilliancy of sunrise and sunset, and in the delicate greys of mist and rain' (Bonney 1882, 76); features which are arguably evident and observable in Walton's Dolomite art. Bonney, again, admits that Walton often neglected the details of the foreground, so important for picturesque classification, 'in his passion for skies and mists and snows' (*ibid.*, 77). Walton would publish the revealingly named *Clouds and Their Combinations* in 1868.

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Fig. 6.8 - Elijah Walton, *Frontispiece*, *Matterhorn*, and *The Grivola*, chromolithograph from *The Peaks and Valleys of the Alps* (1868); *Ragwort*, chromolithograph from *Flowers from the Upper Alps, with Glimpses of Their Homes* (1869).

Gilbert's *Cadore, or Titian's Country* (1869), followed by Amelia B. Edwards' *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys* (1872), had already highlighted the picturesqueness of the Dolomites, as framed within Titian's painted backgrounds, bringing the mountains somehow into the foreground of both the pictorial and cultural milieu. Walton's art achieves a similar result by adhering to some of the established principles of the picturesque, contributing to the 'unprecedented positive evaluation of the characteristics of roughness, irregularity and decay' (Ackerman 2003, 81-82). If the guidebooks of Murray and Gilbert and Churchill, for example, had instructed travellers not only on what they ought to see but also on how to see it, the picturesque elements in these writings insisted on a way of looking at natural landscapes as if they were landscape paintings. This picturesque way of framing landscapes reveals an attempt to 'establish defined limits to experience of nature as a psychological and social defence against the uncontrollability and frightfulness of the sublime' (*ibid.*, 82). Equally Walton's inclusion of human figures and mountaineers, detailed close-ups of flowers, trees and vernacular dwellings in the foreground of his mountainous landscapes certainly adds an identifiable picturesque component within the pictures. But these elements – as the little boat floating on the lake in his Civetta painting (Fig. 6.6) – could hardly compete with the grandiose representation of mountains, which always dominate his art.

The problem, as Bonney had already highlighted in introducing the reader to Walton's illustrations in *Peaks and Valleys of the Alps* ('they are not meant to be looked at like engravings, but as pictures – a distance of about three yards will be the best stand-point for most persons'), was one of scale and distance of the point of view (Fig. 6.8). Readers came to be increasingly used to approach landscape art by holding a book in their hands or placed on their laps, rather than admiring paintings hung at a distance on a wall. This new gazing practice, certainly facilitated by the improvements in engraving techniques, had

some significant consequences also at the level of the represented content – rather than holding in their hands the sublime atmosphere of a mighty panorama, people became increasingly eager to browse through a book searching for the picturesque character of a distinct cultural region. Both the huge dimension of Bonney and Walton's illustrated books (*Peaks and Valleys of the Alps* is 57 cm tall, see Fig. 6.8) and the significant distance of Walton's represented landscapes became gradually incompatible with the increasing curiosity towards the charming and lovely colours of portrayed local communities and landscapes, appreciable only on a more intimate scale.

Walton's Symbolic Picturesque

Walton's art is helpful for pinning down both the theory and practice of the English picturesque to the Dolomite landscape. The result of his art achieved two ends. On one hand, he developed a coherent technique that faithfully described the optical reality of the Dolomites, owing to evidence of geological and topographical precision of individual Dolomite mountains and features; on the other, he was concerned with associating cultural phenomena, namely the picturesque aesthetic, with his chosen subject matter. Whether or not these two elements were considered too conflicting in his work remains to be debated; what is certain, however, is that Walton's art provides a useful medium for unravelling and identifying the symbolic energy applied, artistically, to the Dolomites in the Victorian period. The practice of the picturesque, framed within Walton's art, offers 'a knowledge of the relevant histories of images' of the Dolomites and their interpretation as well as constituting a 'knowledge of particular parts of the full range of images and image-making practices' associated with them (Elkins 2003, 30). The picturesque, as already noted, is a very visual process, but it is through this picturing practice that we can further

substantiate the idea that the Dolomites became iconic in the minds of the English – iconically English, even.

Methodologically, my approach to landscape is here sensitive to symbolic and iconic elements. It is not simply Cosgroviaan or Warburgian, and not simply an approach that emphasises the circumstantial or contextual interpretation of pictorial symbols. Such an approach, developed in the art historical methodologies of Aby Warburg, Ervin Panofsky, and Ernst Gombrich, is 'suitable to the idea of landscape as a way of seeing, interpreted largely through the medium of visual images' (DeLue and Elkins 2008, 33). Denis Cosgrove successfully engaged with this approach, for example, in *The Palladian Landscape* (1993). He examined closely the changing materiality of the Renaissance Veneto landscape and its artistic and cartographic representation; vision, in the 'Palladian landscape', constitutes a powerful leitmotif of landscape interpretation. This approach, however, is mostly interpretative rather than productive, more explanatory than dynamic. Walton's art can be interpreted as 'symbolically' picturesque; but I want to ask whether it is also, if placed within the circulation model of Collins (2004), part of cycle within a chain of symbolic interactions, which adds a creative element to pictorial media in relation to the landscape it represents. To put it in another way, do Walton's Dolomite views only interpret, imply the picturesque, or do they also bring about something more palpable, more tangible, like a call for action?

How do we begin to contemplate this suggestion if the picturesque is purely and only visual, internally and externally? There is some discrepancy between Cosgrove's approach, in fact, and the more literary-critical one that uses methods embraced by scholars of landscape interpretation, including Nancy and James Duncan (Duncan and Duncan 1988). Their approach to landscape, based upon literary theory and hermeneutics, has revealed the primacy of the 'text' as landscape metaphor. This begins to address the problem of the supremacy of

the purely and only visual in landscape; they stress, moreover, the result of power relationships, for instance, that are effectual in the formation of space. These relationships may promote or demote various 'visible' elements in landscape that are symbolically significant to the powerful. They offer an additional solution for understanding representations of landscape as 'text', not only metaphorically speaking, but also in the way in which landscape representations are involved with the material constructions of landscape.

'As the visible material surfaces of places, landscapes can evoke powerful images and sentiment', as Duncan and Duncan argue, they also 'help to constitute community values, playing a central role in the performance of place-based social identities and distinction' (Duncan and Duncan 2001, 387). For them, landscape is produced by interaction, through practices that are 'aestheticized', which can serve as a useful model for defining the 'Dolomite picturesque' materially. If a stance towards landscape can be both aesthetic as well as practical, we can heuristically infer that the picturesque practices of gazing upon the art of Walton, or upon the Dolomites themselves, or sketching them, have a value in their own right. But these practices are not necessarily independent from other processes, such as economic, political, or social, that take place simultaneously in the internal or external realms. Duncan and Duncan argue that 'saying a wilderness is a human creation is not an ontological statement; it certainly does not mean that the non-humanized landscape to which the word refers (the reality out there, so to speak) does not exist independently of human knowledge of it. Wilderness is a humanly imposed category with a particular geography and history' (*ibid.*, 398). The picturesque has been discussed as the picturing of the quintessential embodiment of nature; what Duncan and Duncan propose it that the very process of 'aestheticization' of landscape along picturesque lines means that human agency is involved in the

process in one way or another, thus inserting into that practice an active, human dimension – in one sense, the very thing the picturesque tries to do away with.

My argument is that the picturesqueness of the Dolomites, and its art, fits in between the morphology of the mountains themselves, the performance of being in the Dolomite landscape, and the aesthetic responses to representations of the Dolomites. Following Duncan and Duncan, I do not assume that the picturesque is simply an aesthetic, abstract response to the immediate or is an ‘unarticulated response to the materiality of art or nature or whatever objects toward which one adopts an aesthetic attitude’ (*ibid.*, 391). In fact, a new level of dynamism is added to this mix, between the realms of materiality and cognitive, if we consider that, through Walton’s Dolomite chromolithographs, the Dolomites were literally transported into the home, physically, and into the mind, imaginatively, of the English viewer. It is in this way that the Dolomite landscape, and its particular brand of the picturesque, ‘travelled’ across Europe to aquatint itself with English people.

We are evoking here again the duplicitous meaning of landscape, focusing on the debate surrounding the development of cultural geography more generally. This debate first emerged from the dissection of the etymology of the word landscape itself: on one hand connected to the visual and, on the other, inevitably linked to some kind of material referent. The term developed in northern Europe from both territorial connotations (land-) and the rules that governed how to perceive land or the earth’s surface from a particular point (-scape or -schaft) (Olwig 2002; 1996). The original morphological approach to landscape, first developed by Carl Sauer and the Berkeley School geographers in the early twentieth century, saw the material forms within a specific landscape as expressive or representative of the culture in a geographical area. Sauer’s *The Morphology of Landscape* (1925), which defined the Berkeley School, however, ‘was confined to the study of visible forms, it was the eye that determined their

selection and inclusion' (Cosgrove 1985, 57). The so-called 'cultural turn' of the 1980s saw geographers beginning to explore landscape symbolically and ideologically so that the study of landscape became less about the measureable features of the earth's surface and more about the landscapes metaphoric character, particularly as they appear in mediated representations. Famously, Cosgrove and Daniels' formalized this approach in their edited volume, *The Iconography of Landscape* (1997), which understood all cultural landscapes as visual and representational phenomena.

While I position my understanding of picturesque landscape within this traditional landscape geography, as well as this thesis itself being generally conditioned by the framework of the 'cultural turn', I don't oversubscribe to it. Cosgrove and Daniels' landscape-as-text, post-modern approach has been recently challenged, and various experimental, embodied and non-representational geographies, such as those of Ingold, Urry and Wylie utilized elsewhere in this work, have called for an approach to landscape that is more phenomenological and performative (Wylie 2007). This 'new ontology of visibility', which attempts to 'capture the complex kinetic intertwining of vision and visible' (Della Dora 2007, 291) has, usefully for the argument of this chapter, transferred the notion of performance from the 'subject to the landscape itself' (*ibid.*). Saying that, I do not want to dwell exclusively within this new stain of geography either, one that perhaps relies too heavily on the tangible and measureable 'land' dimension of landscape. Rather, taking the intermediate ground, the picturesqueness of the Dolomites, and its cultural landscape more generally, emerges from both its artistic representations and its materiality.

In surveying recent developments in visual studies, Keith Moxey provides a useful way for deconstructing and inverting the representations and practices surrounding images and imagery of the picturesque. Recent developments,

around what is termed the ‘pictorial turn’ or ‘iconic turn’, have focused upon ‘the existential status of images, one that concentrates on their nature and structure’, adding a valuable dimension to the interpretative agenda of visual studies (Moxey 2008, 132; Mitchell 1986; 1995). Images, for Moxey, are not only representations. Rather we need to be attentive to the image’s status as ‘presentation’. An ‘appreciation of the “exterior” of the visual object, its protean interventions in the life of culture, its vitality as a representation, need not be regarded as an alternative to attempts to come to terms with its “interior”, its capacity to affect us, its aesthetic and poetic appeal, its status as a presentation’ (*ibid.*, 133). Similarly to Duncan and Duncan (2001), the distinctions between subject and object, seer and seen, are positioned as less epistemologically clear cut.

But Moxey, following the lead established by Georges Didi-Huberman and others, argues that the work of art itself is an active principle, an image capable of generating or enhancing its own significance and meaning in its own right. In this way, a religious artwork becomes more spiritual than the subject it depicts; or, a mountain landscape painting assumes more picturesque qualities than it was originally designed to communicate or are evident in the work. Deeming that images have a life of their own also means that the ‘presence’ of images allows a ‘capacity to outrun the meanings attributed to them by generations of interpreters’ (*ibid.*, 135).

If we agree that Walton’s Dolomite art was able to travel and transport the Dolomites, somehow, to England, then perhaps the Dolomites are not only transferable across space, but also across time. The art of Walton and Turner has endured, as has the poetry of Wordsworth; we ‘cannot ignore the fact we encounter the image in the present. Regardless of the period in which it may have been created, it is necessarily alive in our own time’ (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, whichever theory one aligns themselves with, and after weighing up their

various applications and suitability (Hills 2005), it is difficult to argue against the idea that imagery, in art or literature, as presentation or representation, affords us access to something that at least resonates with the 'real'.

The iconic turn, however, is applicable and suitable in one other way. Because of its reliance on the interaction of images between object and subject, the iconic turn approach fits into the metanarrative and methodology of Collins' (2004) circulation of symbolism and 'interaction ritual chains' model, which I am employing to 'unravel' the symbols of English culture in the Dolomite landscape. Walton's chromolithographs, therefore, not only act as a product of the picturesque – they serve here as one of the 'magnetic' situations of 'emotion, motivation and symbolic charge' through which Englishness, it is argued, was (and is) inscribed into the Dolomites (Collins 2004, 51). They also serve as an explanatory 'interaction' for the way in which the Dolomites themselves became inscribed into the minds of the English, accomplishing Collins' third level of circulation. This third tier is the 'most intimate level of circulation [and] is inside the individuals' minds, in the inner conversations that make up thinking, in the fantasies that make up the inner self' (*ibid.*, 99).

Bonney's descriptive introduction to *The Peaks and Valleys of the Alps* (1868) makes clear connections between the landscape of the Alps and their visual qualities; including compositional unity, variety, and irregularity of form and colour, which were all understood as classic elements of the English picturesque. In this sense, both Bonney's text and Walton's illustrations are convincingly picturesque, fulfilling the categories that had been established a century before, but that continued to show their longevity (Buzard 1993b, 15). The English Lake District established a matrix of topographic memory through the art of Turner and Wordsworth – that is, they helped forge a geographical space where the picturesque took hold and was developed. This space and

matrix became a geographical model to be projected onto landscapes further afield, notably onto the Dolomite Mountains.

In the following effusively poetic yet revealing passage from *The Peaks and Valleys*, we note that the English landscape itself is cemented as the picturesque paradigm. It is through love for the English picturesque landscape, and by engaging with picturesque practices, that English observers of the Alps, in art and in nature, are truly able to appreciate mountain scenery and the landscape of their own country. It is worth quoting in full:

Our home country is often exquisitely lovely; nothing in their way can be more attractive than the undulating banks of the Wye and the broad valley of the Severn, the breezy southern downs, and the fertile midland table-land, the Westmorland lakes and the Welsh estuaries; or can be richer in colour than the moorlands or hills when glowing in summer with crimson heather or dappled in autumn with the tender pink of blossoming ling and the ruddy gold of withering brake. In all there is a soothing charm, a sense of pace and dreamy repose, but not of grandeur or of awfulness. The love which they excite, is far more akin to that which is felt for those nearest and dearest in our homes and daily walk through life, than to the solemn reverence for angelic beings, or for Him who once brooded in the cloud on the granite peaks of Sinai, and shook the crags of Horeb with the thunder's roll and the trumpet's sounding long and loud. Moreover, we need not fear, as some have done, that the Alps will spoil us for our English scenery. For myself, I am bound to say that though each year I find my appreciation of them increased, I love and value our home scenery the more on my return because of its entire contrast and essential difference (1868, 7-8).

The passage shows how picturesque truly constituted a visual but mediated way of looking at the world – it involved the actual ‘picturing’ or ‘framing’ of landscape on canvas and in the minds of individuals. The artistic representation

of the picturesque movement, in some senses the only incarnation of the picturesque, 'played a vital part in shaping what was classically regarded as an aesthetically pleasing landscape' (Crang 1997, 360).

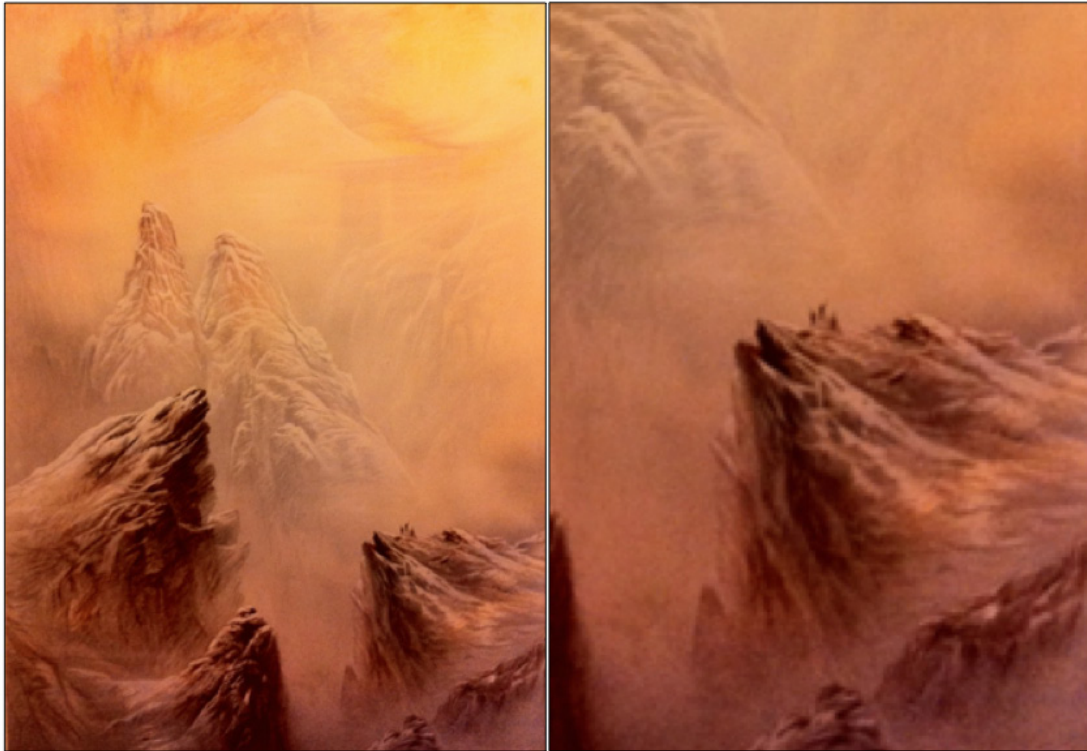


Fig. 6.9 - Elijah Walton, *In the Valley of Aosta*, and detail, chromolithograph from *The Peaks and Valleys of the Alps* (1868).

The picturesque was about enforcing distance between the observed subject and the observer; picturesque landscape was something to be seen from a chalet window, or gazed upon in a book or in a gallery. Vernacular architecture, human figures, details of the mundane, or of flora, were all romanticized, but were included to create a scale and perspective (Fig. 6.8 and Fig. 6.9). Human agency in the picturesque landscape was originally frowned upon; this landscape, ironically the most controlled, constructed, and choreographed 'thing', was to be enshrined as nonhuman. Landscape was designed to stimulate emotional and aesthetic responses, but only in the visual, imaginative realms of perception: 'The distance between the visceral experience and the visual in the

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picturesque tradition privileges perspective and aesthetics' (Tolia-Kelly 2007, 333).

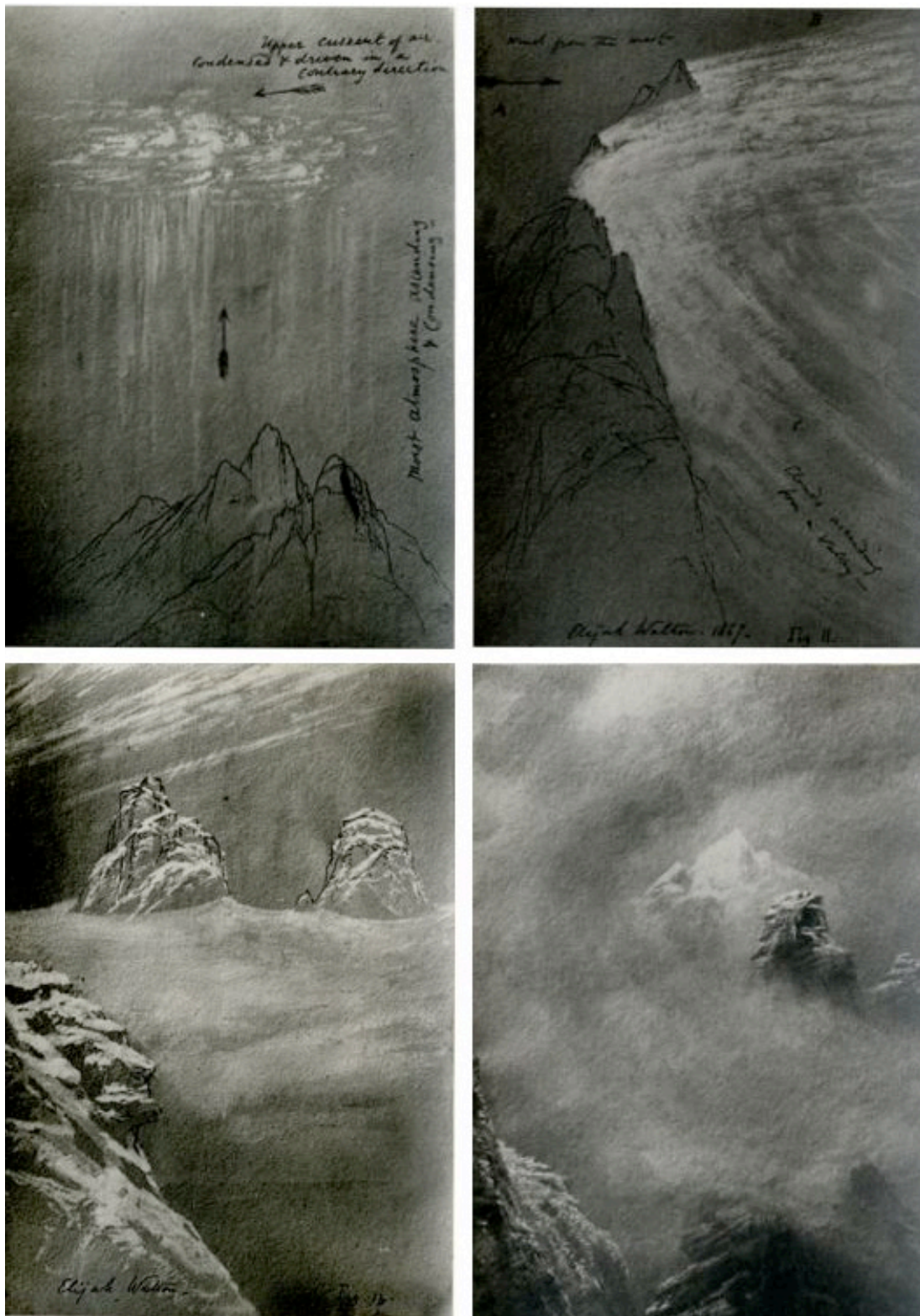


Fig. 6.10 - Elijah Walton, *Clouds: Their Forms and Combinations*, lithographs (1868a).

Ruskin's brand of the picturesque as 'heartlessness' developed, however, into a different approach to landscape; one that was more embodied, corporeal, and human. It was Ruskin, after all, who 'instructed painters to rival the geologist, botanist and meteorologist in their knowledge of topography, vegetation and skies' (Cosgrove 1985, 57), whom Walton seems to echo in his *Flowers from the Upper Alps* (1869), and, more graphically, in his handbook on clouds, allegedly directed to students of painting, *Clouds: Their Forms and Combinations* (1868a), but sold in the same big format as his alpine picture-books, almost as an album to enjoy as a substitute of the sky (Fig. 6.8 and Fig. 6.10). But in order to combine artistic sensitivity to nature with natural empiricism, sketching and the 'being in' landscape, at close human proximity, was necessary; consequently, a more obviously material element was inserted into the picturesque 'aestheticization' process.

In this Ruskinian picturesque vein, Walton would go on to publish *The Peaks in Pen and Pencil for Students of Alpine Scenery* (1872), which would, according to *The Athenæum*,

assist students, by placing before them a series of drawings, with descriptive text [by Bonney], pointing out his method of proceeding in the choice of position, as well as the delimitation of Alpine scenery. The Author has found this method most useful, not only to avoid repetition of forms, but to give that wonderful solidity and distance so necessary in Alpine sketching. It is the Author's belief that peak after peak and ravine after ravine may thus be rendered with truth, if those sketches he is about to publish be studied with care (The Athenaeum 1871, 5).

This massive volume contained seven Dolomite views, including the peaks of the Cristallo, Tofana, Antelao, Marmolada, and Pelmo (Angelini 1987, 35–36). The instructions to users, however, also contained advice on what 'must be avoided if a picturesque sketch is sought after in the high Alps' (*ibid.*). Clearly

designed within a picturesque mind-set, Walton's art, and in particular his Dolomite sketching manual, would typify the objective-subjective dichotomy inherent in the Dolomites as picturesque mountains – the Dolomite picturesque. It aims to achieve the picturesque aesthetic, involving a distanced viewpoint and perception, but it also encourages material engagement with the Dolomites, whether through sketching them or by gazing at them on the paper of an illustrated book, or indeed by the promotion of being in the Dolomite landscape itself.



Fig. 6.11 - Mary McDowall, *On a High Alp*, linocut from *Peaks and Frescos* (1928).

Already by 1928, this picturesque way of viewing landscape was recirculated again into more expressionistic depictions of the Dolomites in England. In Arthur McDowall's *Peaks and Frescos: A Study of the Dolomites* (1928), whose title clearly evokes Walton's own titles, we see the Turner- and Walton-like distances, colours, and framing practices at work in the linocuts by

his wife Mary McDowall (Fig. 6.11 and Fig. 6.12); but they also adhere to and accompany different picturesque techniques. From the late Victorian period Turner's evocative views, as espoused by Ruskin, were increasingly blended with ideas about 'sentimentality' and 'cosiness'. We can identify in these linocuts, for example, a 'range of sentimental rhetoric ... which proceeds in parallel with the increasing abstraction of domesticity as Ruskin sees things, then textures, then abstractions' (Feldman 2002, 26).



Fig. 6.12 - Mary McDowall, *The Last Church in the Valley*, linocut from *Peaks and Frescos* (1928).

A more satisfying example of a direct, close recirculation of the art of Titian and the Dolomite picturesque comes from art produced in the Dolomites themselves, as soon as 1897. Only thirty years after Josiah Gilbert cemented the Dolomites as palpable 'Titian's Country' and Elijah Walton had invested himself

in reproducing the mountainous background of the Renaissance master as a foregrounding subject itself, the South Tyrolean artist Gottfried Hofer (1858-1932) would produce the huge, seven and half meter by four canvas, *La Madonna di Campiglio* in 1897 (Fig. 6.13; Recusani 2006a, and 2006b).



Fig. 6.13 - Gottfried Hofer, *Madonna di Campiglio*, northern wall Salone Hofer, Grand Hotel des Alpes, Madonna di Campiglio (1897).

The subject matter is essentially classical; surrounded by angles and cherubs, the painting depicts the Virgin Mother and baby Jesus receiving gifts from children. Arguably the painting directly corresponds to the religious genre of art so-highly regarded in the hierarchy of Victorian art criticism (Cosgrove 1985, 48), but it also radiates picturesqueness. The mountains are not painted in a way that could suggest sublime beauty, instead, they subtly feature in a distanced background; the scene is bucolic, peaceful, youthful and feminine. The realities of harsh mountain life are nowhere to be seen; only children in Tyrolean attire and an umbrella may have given its first spectators a connection to themselves. Unusually, this painting was commissioned to adorn the ballroom of the Grand Hotel des Alpes in Madonna di Campiglio, in the Brenta Dolomites, where it hangs still today in the Salone Hofer (Fig. 6.13). The

painting is part of a larger series of Hofer's work in the same room; frescos feature the flora and fauna of the local environment, satires, wizards, hunts and scenic cameos of the area's surrounding mountain views (see also Chapter 8).

Returning to McDowall's illustrated book briefly, however, is interesting because by that time, another thirty years after Hofer's *Madonna*, there is no mention of Titian. The picturesque would seem to have fully replaced the high art motifs and attractions discussed in the previous chapter, which were recycled in Walton's picturesque renditions. The Dolomites are still framed picturesquely, but are so in more intimate, material, and human terms. McDowall's understanding of the Dolomites, its landscape, architecture, churches, and frescos, is enhanced through an ethnographic account of the Dolomite people and a close study of 'fashions in houses', native flowers, and the nature of inns. Of the hostelries of the Dolomites:

It is the clean simplicity of the unvarnished walls and the mellow aroma that lurks in them, not hanging heavily like a scent, but hardly noticed till the sun goes down and wars the panels. You nestle snugly in a fragrant box which opens to the freshness outside (McDowall and McDowall 1928, 94).

There where the illustrations tend towards a more expressionistic style, it is the text that acts as a picturesque matrix to read them. The kind of imagery found here would be more affiliated to the picturesqueness Amelia B. Edwards' *Untrodden Peaks* (1873) found in the Dolomites at the 'fairy land' of St. Ulrich, than, say, of the Dolomite picturesque attempted by at Walton, which erred to close to the sublime.

Thinking of Collins, again, however, and by way of conclusion, it has been argued that Elijah Walton's work, the chief example of the artistic embodiment of the English picturesque in the Dolomites, motivated a dynamic circulation of Dolomite symbolism that was both aesthetic and active. By attaching a certain

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iconic magnetism to the landscape of the Dolomites, Walton's art circulated English ideas originally formed in the Lakes into imagery, representations, and presentations related to the Dolomites, thus identifying the Dolomites, somehow bizarrely, with something English in the minds of his readership and the collectors of his picturesque chromolithographs and art. In this way, Walton's 'landscape is not a genre of art but a medium' (Mitchell 1994a, 5), despite its critical response. The Dolomite Mountains – natural, pictorial, symbolic, imagined, if one can separate all these facets – acted to shape landscapes picturesquely, as if the picturesque was an agent in its own right.

Notes

¹ Pennell's original book, beautifully illustrated by Joseph Pennell, will soon have two followers in the guides by Charles Lincoln Freeston (1865-1942), *Cycling in the Alps: With Some Notes on the Chief Passes* (1900), and *The High-Roads of the Alps: A Motoring Guide to One Hundred Mountain Passes* (1911), which also include the Dolomites (see here Chapter 8).

² This is its sobering incipit: 'The world was steadily improving till about thirty years ago. After that period it remained comparatively stationary for a long time; but of late it has shown painful symptoms of deterioration. This truth, which is generally known to men of my age, is strikingly confirmed by the history of the Alps' (Stephen 1894, 460).

³ Conway's book was accompanied by the beautiful illustrations of the painter Arthur David McCormick (1860-1943). The agreement between the two was that McCormick's pictures should portray the mountains in their gigantic outlooks, avoiding making them look like 'mole-hills' (see 'Himalayan Pictures', *The New York Times*, 29 Dec 1895); McCormick's more personal and picturesque sketches, particularly attentive to the habits and customs of the local inhabitants, were then published in his own *An Artist in the Himalayas* (McCormick 1895).

⁴ Stephen's picturesque outlook was already highlighted in the first chapter of his epochal *The Playground of Europe* (1871), aptly entitled 'The Love of Mountain Scenery' and neatly divided into two sections: 'The Old School' and 'The New School' (*ibid.*, 1-68). Put in Ruskinian terms, the 'old school' portrayed a scenery tainted by 'mountain gloom' or a 'hate' for the horrific and desolate aura attached to Alpine landscape; the 'new school', instead, promoted a scenery characterised by the 'mountain glory' or a 'love' for the picturesque feeling attached to Alpine views.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Dolomite Close-Ups

*I felt the cool rock pressed to my cheek,
and the contact turned the train of my
thought from physical activity to mental
reflection; and I realized my isolated
position as a tiny insect perched midway
up that vast wall, with half the sky cut off
above, and an unthinkable abyss sinking
far below.*

— Joseph Sanger Davies

This chapter exploits the idea of haptic vision in order to gain a better understanding of a new kind of travel guidebooks that provide a mixture of representational and non-representational outlooks on the Dolomite landscape through a close-up perspective. The English material used here transmits something of a ‘zoomed-in’ quality of vision, offering a detailed account of a ‘gaze’ that is increasingly detached from the panoramic notions of mountain ‘views’ or ‘vistas’ within a sublime or picturesque scenery, and is, instead, more at the scale of individual rocks and finger-tips. The close-up view also allows us to better appreciate the affinities, in both features and techniques, between the Dolomite ‘playground’ and the Lake District ‘playground’, or, as George Dixon Abraham called it, the ‘Northern English playground’ (1907, 181), not to be confused with the ‘Northern Playground’ with which William Cecil Slingsby (1904) had already dubbed Norway.

Four complementary areas throughout the chapter shall elucidate the notion of close-ups. The first section uses Joseph Sanger Davies' *Dolomite Strongholds* (1894) as a new way to market the Dolomites as 'prominent mountains'. The second reveals how the visual space created by the 'modern' mountaineer is complicated by an increasingly tactile or, better, haptic dimension. The third section uses popular postcard imagery to reinforce the argument of Dolomite close-ups as illustrating a kind of gaze that chimes with the haptic contact popularized in Sanger Davies' *Dolomite Strongholds*. The final section explores the distinction between the views on the Dolomites by English mountaineers and their local guides, describing their encounter as an intimate exchange between two cultural world-views, which becomes relevant for evaluating further notions of Englishness instilled in the Dolomite region.

Prominent Strongholds

Among the admirers of the three large Dolomite landscapes by Elijah Walton, exhibited at the German Gallery on New Bond Street in 1867 and donated to the Birmingham Art Gallery in 1868, figured also Rev. Joseph Sanger Davies, author of the acclaimed *Dolomite Strongholds: The Last Untrodden Alpine Peaks* (1894).¹ In the first chapter of his book, Sanger Davies offers an account of the panoramic scenery he viewed from the summit of Croda da Lago, near Cortina d'Ampezzo (Fig. 7.1), without neglecting, while gazing north at the magnificent Monte Tofana, to recall one of Walton's large paintings:

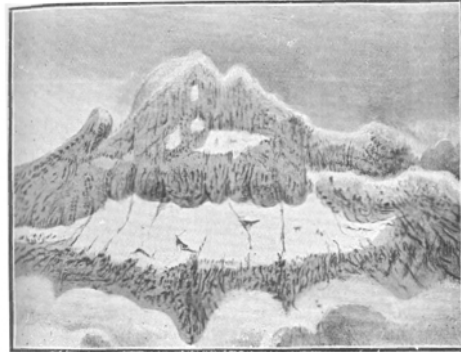
Tofana to the north was half-veiled, and reminded one of that marvellous picture of this mighty peak by Elijah Walton. To the south Pelmo stood, an upright and flat-topped bastion of rock, like the rounded keep of some Titanic castle rising 6,000 feet nearly straight up from its base. The outlet of the valley with Monte Duranno came next, then the weird but beautiful Antelao, a sheeted ghost, or as some will have it, a white-veiled bride. Its

Dolomite Close-Ups

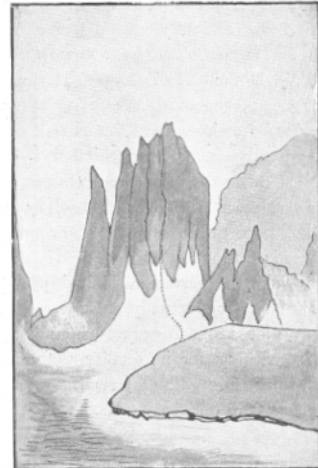
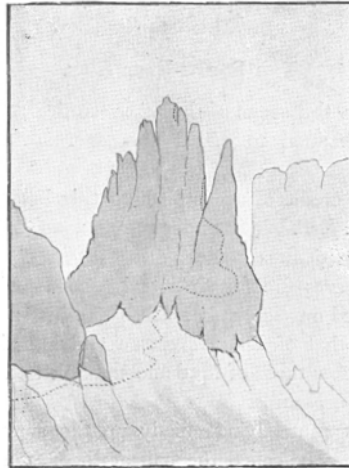
sloping shoulders topped with a strangely-turned neck and small uplifted head, give it a form of grace never to be forgotten, and one which adorns the background of more than one of Titian's masterpieces. Pieve di Cadore, his birthplace, is almost in view round a buttress of this singularly romantic mountain (Sanger Davies 1894, 24).



CRISTALLO, FROM THE CRODA DA LAGO.



MONTE CIVETTA, FROM THE CRODA DA LAGO.



THE FÜNFFINGERSPITZE, FROM THE SOUTH. THE FÜNFFINGERSPITZE, FROM THE SOUTH-EAST. THE FÜNFFINGERSPITZE, FROM THE NORTH.

Fig. 7.1 - Examples of 'representational' mountain views in Sanger Davies' own drawings: 'Cristallo, from the Croda da Lago'; 'Monte Civetta, from the Croda da Lago'; 'The Fünffingerspitze from the South, from the South-East, and from the North' (Sanger Davies 1896, 25, 21, 106, 124, 112).

Unfortunately, Walton's *Monte Tofana seen from Cortina d'Ampezzo* is now lost, like the other picture from the triptych, representing *Monte Marmarolo seen from the Auronzo Valley*. And yet, looking at the wide-angle taken on the preserved *Monte Civetta seen from the Lake of Alleghe* (see Fig. 6.6), still at

Birmingham, we can easily speculate about the ‘mightiness’ of Walton’s Northern Tofana.

It is worth comparing Sanger Davies’ scenery with the one provided by Josiah Gilbert in his *Cadore or Titian’s Country* (1869), roughly on the same mountains but from a different perspective:

Beyond it rises the Marmarolo, but its peaks seen here with their huge subjacent bulk of mountain are less imposing than from Titian’s house below. Turning towards the south-west, and following the course of the Boita valley, the eye is caught by a turret lifted in air – a turret, as it might be, of a Babel reaching unto heaven: it belongs to that marvellous piece of dolomite architecture, the Sasso di Pelmo. The rest of it from this point is cut off by the flanks of the Antelao, which, though the kernel of the Cadore mountain system, is still but little seen. To the left of the Pelmo rises a spectral mass, which those who know its surpassing grandeur as seen from the secluded lake of Alleghe, can scarcely believe to be indeed the Civita – a dolomite of nobler proportions, or at least more scenically disposed for effect than any other (*ibid.*, 117).

To reinforce his description, also Gilbert refers his reader to Walton’s *Monte Civetta seen from the Lake of Alleghe*, now in Birmingham (see Chapter 6).

Distinct from Walton’s and Gilbert’s, however, Sanger Davies’ gaze is not cast from the valley – from Cortina, in Walton’s picture, from the Castle of Cadore, in Gilbert’s description – but from the peak, qualifying his reference to Titian and Walton as an evocative gloss for the reader well acquainted with the Dolomite visual repertoire. The gaze, however, has changed – and with the gaze also the invitation of looking at the Dolomite mountains not anymore as subjects of picturesque or sublime views, but as mighty castles with which to engage physically, as fortresses to conquer through climbing. The evocation of Titian and Walton – as well as the ‘gothic’ reference to ‘castles’, ‘turrets’ and ‘strongholds’ – furnishes a view that reveals, once again, the constitutional

duplicity of the landscape (Daniels 1989, 196), seen as a 'geographical metaphor' that conveys simultaneously its material and its representational configurations (Minca 2007c, 434).

If Gilbert's *Cadore* elevated Titian's Dolomitic backgrounds into a distinct foreground subject, a subject that was to be the chief and in some cases the only motif in Walton's picturesque views; Sanger Davies' gaze implies a sensory and engaged, tactile involvement with landscape scenery – a landscape configured as a reward of physical labour. This allows readers of Sanger Davies to somehow touch the Dolomite mountains with their eyes; and their bizarre shapes – repeatedly but almost paradoxically described in architectural terms (pinnacles, obelisks, towers, etc.), as if through a technical vocabulary, such as the one of architecture, one could put order in their chaotic outlook – become in this context a distinct 'signature' that activates the 'sign' of mountaineering practice; see, here, Chapter 4). One way to profitably apply Agamben's theory of signatures to the unique configuration of the Dolomite landscape is to link the concept of 'signature' to the technical term of mountain 'prominence'.

To understand the concept of prominence (Fig. 7.2), we have to delve momentarily into the way in which mountains are measured, and distinguish it from the mostly common one of 'elevation', also referred to as the 'height' or 'altitude' of a mountain above the mean sea level (Dawson 1992; Nuttall and Nuttall 1999). When the measurement of mountains requires a purely objective approach, for earth scientists or physical geographers, for instance, quantifiable features, such as height, mean angle or area, are appropriately measured and recorded. But when mountaineers elect a mountain to climb factors of more qualitative nature, linked to human emotion and subjective perception, become central to the assessment of a particular mountain's lure or merit. Personal subjectivity, therefore, and the intangible qualities of a mountain play an

important role in designating it as worthy of climbing. In this case, the 'prominence' of a mountain becomes more telling than its 'elevation'.

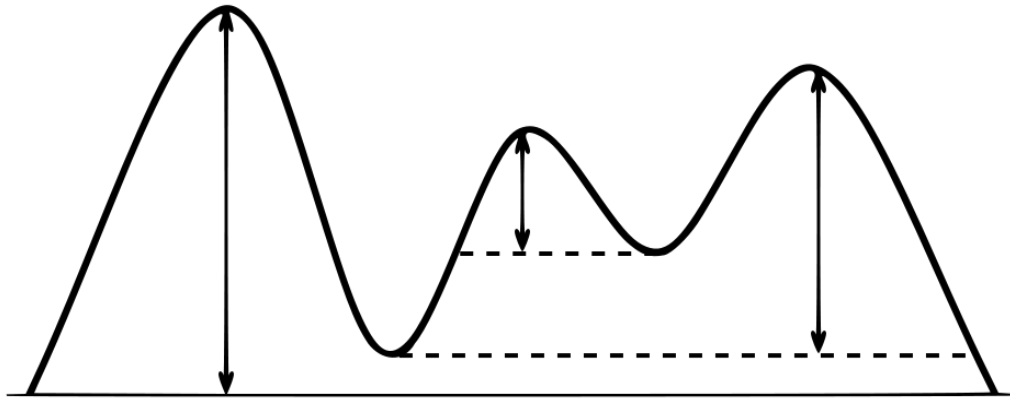


Fig. 7.2 - Topographic Prominence: Vertical arrows show the topographic prominence of three peaks; the dotted horizontal lines show the lowest contours that do not encircle higher peaks (Wikisource).

From a technical point of view, topographic prominence is conventionally defined as the height of a peak's summit above the lowest contour line encircling it, sometimes referred to as 'lowest pass', 'saddle point' or 'col' – 'the height of a mountain above the saddle of the highest ridge connecting it to a peak higher still' (Helman and Earl 2005, 3). For example, if the topographic prominence of a mountain is P metres, one must descend at least P metres in order to get from its summit to a higher one, called 'parent mountain'. As such, the prominence of a mountain provides an idea of its relative distinction or isolation within a given landscape. Being therefore a relative measure, to be extracted in relation to a higher peak within 'reasonable' distance, the prominence of a mountain usually differs from its elevation.²

By encapsulating the subjective significance of a summit, prominence acts, for mountaineers, as a reliable measure. If 'net elevation' is related to a mountain's local relief, and 'net elevation gain' is closely related to the physical effort of climbing a mountain, one concludes that prominence is correlated with the physical effort of climbing a mountain – and that the summit altitude enjoys

no such correlation' (*ibid.*, 6). Mountains with high prominence tend to be the highest points in a given locality and likely allow for extraordinary, uninterrupted views from their summits; peaks with low prominence are usually subsidiary tops of some higher peak or insignificant independent summits.

The worthiness of a mountain depends thus on a cluster of objectives but also subjective factors determining its attractiveness – the panoramic view from its peak, the contemplation of self and nature, the level of difficulty or competency imposed by the terrain, the feeling of personal triumph or defeat in climbing, and the emotional energies that all these practices generate. Such factors further complicate the notion of 'prominence' distinguishing it clearly from the one of 'elevation'. The elevation of a mountain is not necessarily the primary cause for its impressiveness. The concept of mountain 'prominence', practically introduced as a more meaningful alternative to 'elevation', is far more richer, and heuristically employed here in both its objective and subjective terms, as a replacement for 'altitude' as a means for describing the empirical worthiness of mountains: 'it is doubtful that even the most detailed objective description could capture intangible qualities that compel one to admire or climb one mountain or another – even one with the same elevation and prominence' (Helman and Earl 2005, 1).

If the particular morphology of the Dolomites certifies them as 'geologically' prominent, the aesthetic effects of their geological distinctiveness allow us to consider them as 'culturally' prominent; on a global scale, their geological specificity guarantees their reduction to a paradigmatic status in the sense exposed by Agamben (2009). The so-called hard sciences, including earth science and its various branches, have classified the Dolomites physically and objectively; but their objective perspective needs to be complemented with their formal, aesthetic and performative qualities. It is precisely the 'artistic'

combination of these qualities that conveyed the Dolomite landscape its paradigmatic status; the distinct morphology of the 'Dolomite landscape' – Mario Panizza rightly observes – has aided in their advancement as a 'spectacular geoheritage' and 'as a natural work of art' (Panizza 2009, 35).

The topographic prominence of the Dolomites becomes here the iconographic 'signature' of both their aesthetic beauty and performative uniqueness; their geological makeup allows for the fantastic display of rock towers, steeples, ledges, pinnacles, which often appear as isolated peaks. Douglas W. Freshfield beautifully summarises this iconographic uniqueness, through a comparison with the visual arts:

The Dolomite groups would be correctly figured in the Impressionist maps of which we have so many, not as lines but dots; big dots, no doubt, scattered about in a region of valleys and pastoral heights. The valleys have a way of ending in a low gap instead of a high ridge. Consequently you pass from one to another with relatively little trouble. Here and there frown, like giant castles, the red or grey-gold walls of the great Dolomites, the Pelmo and Antelao, the Civetta and Marmolada, the fantastic Rosengarten, and the incredible Pala. But between them spreads a bevy of green and friendly hills (Freshfield 1915, 426).

Figured as 'big dots' and not as 'great walls' or 'sheer ramparts', the Dolomites appear as 'giant castles' strewn here and there about the amiable Italian landscape, as 'prominent strongholds' that offer a paradise for climbers. The evocative idea of climbing on Titian's backgrounds becomes here a real and arduous physical practice in a direct close-up engagement with rocks.

Putting his beguiling subtitle, *The Last Untrodden Alpine Peaks*, aside, the particular character of the Dolomite landscape portrayed by Sanger Davies does not reside in their 'altitude' nor in their 'untroddenness', but rather in their paradigmatic 'prominence'. When we consider the highest peak of the

Dolomites, the Marmolada (3343 m), there is no doubt that its absolute elevation can hardly compete with the one of the Matterhorn (4478 m). And yet, if we compare their respective prominences – 2131 m for the Marmolada against only 1040 m for the Matterhorn – cursory thoughts about the relative ease of climbing the smaller Dolomites or the potential views seen from their peaks are brought into question.

Sanger Davies implicitly refers to the quantifiable meaning of prominence in *Dolomite Strongholds*, but lingers more explicitly on its qualitative dimension. Not only he classifies the Dolomites he climbs as geologically prominent, acknowledging that such a promotion would no doubt be in playful conflict with other climbing accounts pertaining to the Western Alps; but he also clearly inflects their prominence qualitatively, securing the Dolomites as prominent in terms of their morphological lure and cultural symbolism. Although he claims from the outset that it is his ‘business’ to seriously account for the ‘mountaineering character’ of the five ascents he depicts, ‘rather than with [their] beauty’, Sanger Davies is deeply moved by the vistas his climbing affords (Sanger Davies 1894, 5).

Upon the ‘final spire’ of the Croda da Lago, he states the ‘views alone would be in fair weather ample reward for our labour’ (*ibid.*, 21); similarly, in the poetic description of the panoramic views towards the Fünffingerspitze, near Campitello:

the bright Dolomite summits caught the setting sun a fiery glow of rosy-pink, seen nowhere else in the world, seemed to shine through the peaks, as if the rock were an ember all aglow. The shadows of this strange rock are pale cobalt blue deepening into purple, and as I saw that evening, the Fassa Dolomites, with the giant hand of the Fünffinger, afforded the most unworld-like scene of brilliant beauty and unapproachable weirdness it had ever been my lot to behold’ (*ibid.*, 97-98).

Magical portrayals notwithstanding, we can perhaps also forgive Sanger Davies' occasionally exaggerated depiction of the difficulties and dangers he encounters in his ascents, on which he is ultimately always triumphant. Psychology informs us that there was no error in supposing that Sanger Davies probably overestimated perceived height from the top the peaks he climbed (Stefanucci and Proffitt 2009). He is genuinely uneasy, however, in finding himself in one position or another where his nerve is obviously and rightly tested – where objective prominence as well as close-up and personal encounters come into play.

In ascending the 'impermissible' Kleine Zinne, for instance, he and his guides make use of the 'Little Zinne Traverse', a horizontal ledge of only 'nine to fifteen inches wide', describing the 'drop from the edge' as being 'absolutely perpendicular, and this distance nearly 2,000 feet' (Sanger Davies 1894, 52). One difficult part of this ascent 'illustrated the most troublesome feature of many Dolomite peaks which stand nearly erect and rise to a great height', positions Sanger Davies 'upon a gigantic buttress' which had 'not revealed itself before', suggesting that 'the great height had deceived the eye, and the distance had merged the shoulder into the cliff above' (*ibid.*, 49-50). In another account, as he casts his gaze towards the Monte Cristallo on his ascent of Croda da Lago, he describes the mountain he sees as 'a magnificent pile of massive blocks seemingly squared and laid horizontally in tiers, each block, however, being 1,000 feet long and perhaps 500 high' (*ibid.*, 24). Peril and prominence are not only operated on the vertical plane, but also on the multifarious planes between the horizontal and diagonal lines. Sanger Davies says, of the same ascent, that it was the 'greatest marvel' to discover 'any route at all, for the surface of the rock is so vast, about half a mile wide and about six times as high as the highest cathedral towers in England' (*ibid.*, 19).

In these descriptions, he makes clear reference to objective mountain prominence, by guessing it at distance. Important, however, is that subjective prominence emerges not only through panoramic viewing of landscape – in situ or unravelled from a map or a painting – but also in a direct contact with the rock itself. In some ways, Sanger Davies derives more dramatic tension from the smaller scale dimensions of the miniscule ledges and footholds, which become magnified as the only safeguard to prevent a fall into the deathly void below. Again, on the Croda da Lago:

I felt the cool rock pressed to my cheek, and the contact turned the train of my thought from physical activity to mental reflection; and I realized my isolated position as a tiny insect perched midway up that vast wall, with half the sky cut off above, and an unthinkable abyss sinking far below (*ibid.*, 17).

Sanger Davies close-up engagements with the Dolomites operate here at the scale of inches and feet, directly measurable through the body; these are representations of landscapes in the making through non-representational practices. He and his guide must compose themselves to deal with tiny rock projections, clefts and spaces that in ordinary life would be inconsequential, but upon the mountains are equally as crucial for survival as they are threatening.

The character of the illustrations included in *Dolomite Strongholds* strengthens this view. Some represent absolute difficulties, like the one presented by ‘The Ice Camino’ (Fig. 7.3, left), where ‘clinging to the face of the ice ... offered the only means of ascending this forbidding camino’ (*ibid.*, 164); or ‘The Chimney-Breast on the Little Zinne’ (Fig. 7.3, right), where a mountaineer is seen hanging, head down, over a tremendous cleft; or, again, ‘The Little Zinne Traverse’ (Fig. 7.4, left) where ‘danger could not be provided against by the rope’ because ‘the ledge was too long, and at places too narrow to allow for the

width of the shoulders' (*ibid.*, 53). In the image of 'The Ice Camino' (Fig. 7.3, left), we also see the reciprocal relation between guide, porter and mountaineer.

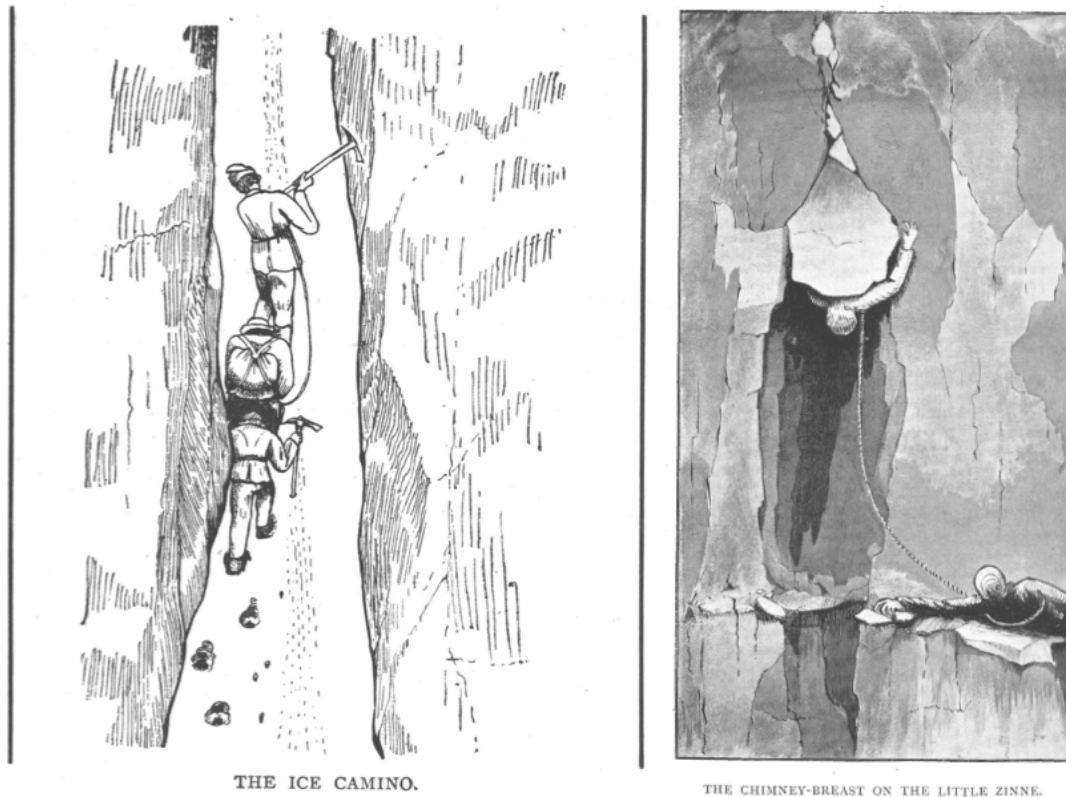


Fig. 7.3 - Left: 'The Ice Camino'. Right: 'The Chimney-Breast on the Little Zinne', from Sanger Davies (1894) 162 and 58. The characteristic trio (left) exhibits the guide (top), the porter (middle) and the mountaineer (bottom).

The 'Firma Loca' (Fig. 7.4, right) is perhaps the most perspicuous illustration – one that really marks the passage from optic vision to haptic practice. These 'holes' in the face of the mountain provide a refuge where respite can be sought and ropes reorganised, allowing only enough space for one person. Sanger Davies, in one of these spaces, during the Croda da Lago ascent, is 'forced to curl up like a fossil in its matrix' (*ibid.*, 14). Here, gaze and engagement are not even activated at the rock-surface of the mountain, but rather from within the rock of the mountain itself and its geological history.

Dolomite Close-Ups

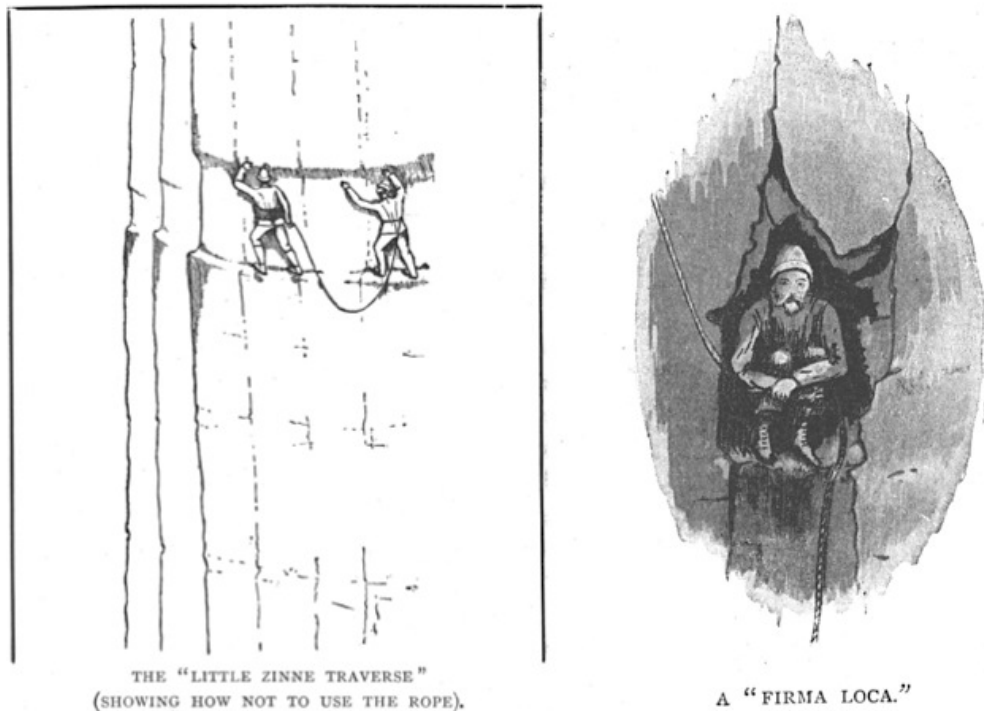


Fig. 7.4 - Left: 'The "Little Zinne Traverse" (Showing How Not to Use the Rope)'. Right: A 'Firma Loca', from Sanger Davies (1894) 55 and 14.

Haptic Mountains

Defined by 'inaccessibility', 'size' and 'steepness', mountain beauty becomes an inflection of topographic prominence – a quality to be appreciated only by the mountaineer, who like a painter who has learned to improve his 'natural sensibility' through 'methodical experience', possesses the 'experimental faith' that allowed him 'to substitute a real living belief for a dead intellectual assent' (Stephen 1871, 273, 276, 277; see here Chapter 3). The authority of Leslie Stephen provides Sanger Davies with a critical framework to portray the English mountaineer as the living instrument to define mountain beauty through practice.

In *The Playground of Europe*, Stephen had described the mountaineer as the beholder of a gaze utterly distinct from the Ruskinian mountain lover:

He measures the size, not by the vague abstract term of so many thousand feet, but by the hours of labour, divided into minutes-each separately felt-of strenuous muscular exertion. The steepness is not expressed in degrees, but by the memory of the sensation produced when a snow-slope seems to be rising up and smiting you in the face; when, far away from all human help, you are clinging like a fly to the slippery side of a mighty pinnacle in mid-air. And as for the inaccessibility, no one can measure the difficulty of climbing a hill who has not wearied his muscles and brain in struggling against the opposing obstacles (*ibid.*, 281).

However, if in *The Playground of Europe* this graphic description was exploited to advance a critique to Ruskin (Morrison 2009), in Sanger Davies the insistence on physical deeds, inherent in the practice of rock climbing, recycles elements that belong to a different tradition. Away from the debates that occurred within the Alpine Club (Gasparetto 2012, 128), Sanger Davies' vocabulary is closer here to descriptions common in the British literature on 'cragmen' rather than 'alpinists'.

Few years after the publication of Sanger Davies' account, the family resemblances between British 'crag' and the dolomites 'rocks' would find its most evident manifestation in George Dixon Abraham's *On Alpine Heights and British Craggs* (1919), whereby 'Alpine Heights' are largely referred to Dolomite peaks (see Chapter 3). Ashley Perry and George Dixon Abraham, known also as the 'Keswick Brothers', had learned from their father George Perry Abraham the art of photography (Fig. 7.5, right); through their camera, the peaks of the Dolomites and those of the Lake Districts become almost interchangeable. The family resemblances are not exhausted in the similarity of the respective morphologies (Fig. 7.5, left), but also in the mountaineering techniques respectively practiced in 'rock' and 'crag' climbing.

Dolomite Close-Ups

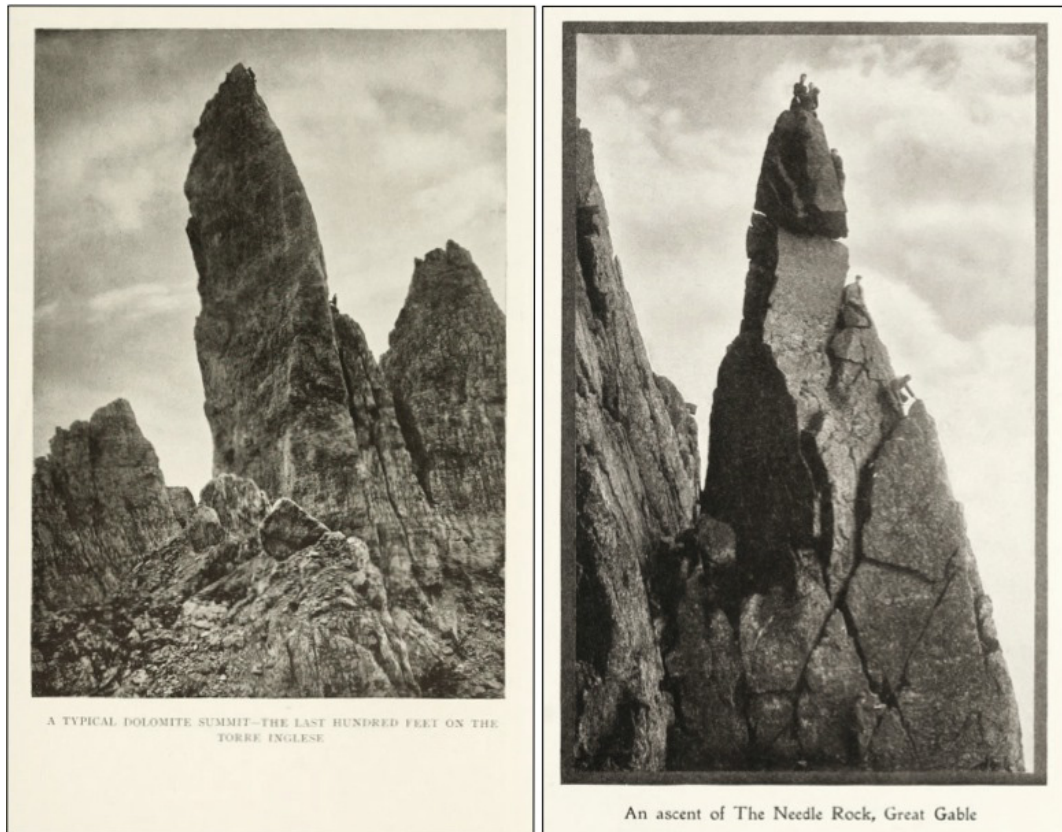


Fig. 7.5 - Left: George Dixon Abraham, *A Typical Dolomite Summit – The Last Hundred Feet on the Torre Inglese*, Cinque Torri, Dolomiti Ampezzane, from George Dixon Abraham, *On Alpine Heights and British Crags* (1919, 20). Right: George Perry Abraham, *An Ascent of The Needle Rock, Great Gable*, Lake District, from Ashley Perry Abraham, *Beautiful Lakeland* (Abraham 1912, 50).

George Dixon Abraham, in his *The Complete Mountaineer* (Abraham 1907, 460), observed with some regret that ‘the Dolomites were first ascended by foreigners’ – that is by Austrian, German and Italian ‘cragsmen’. Their peaks, he added, ‘perpetuate the memory of Zsigmondy, Purtscheller, Schmitt, and Sinigallia; whilst the late Norman-Neruda and the Rev. Sanger-Davies achieved fame and notoriety through their connection with the district’ (see Chapter 3). Via the art of rock-climbing, Abraham establishes a strong link between the Dolomites and the great cliffs of the Lake District; heroes of the former are here suggested as models for climbing the latter, founding a legacy that bypass the glories of The Alpine Club: ‘What man worthy of being called a mountaineer has not heard of Neruda’s wonderful climbs on the Fünffingerspitze (Fig. 7.1 and 7.3

– right), or Sanger-Davies’s even more wonderful sketches of his own unique way up the Kleine Zinne?’ (*ibid.*).³ Norman Neruda had dubbed the *Fünffingerspitze* as ‘a modern “fashionable” peak’ for both the ‘fame-seeking tourist and record-breaking climber ... of all nations’ (Neruda 1899, 219).

Sanger Davies’ *Dolomite Strongholds* offers geographers a revealing keyhole glimpse on a further and distinct development in the English appreciation of the Dolomite landscape. So far the view on and understanding of these mountains implied an visual encounter with them, albeit mediated through physical and intellectual experiences such as rambling or sketching en plain air, as in Amelia Edwards’ bestseller, which Sanger Davies explicitly evokes in his subtitle (*The Last Untrodden Alpine Peaks*). Here, instead, we are offered the opportunity to look at the Dolomites with the eyes – and significantly also with the hands and feet – of an English amateur climber. Occupying a mid-ground between close-up and distant views, *Dolomite Strongholds* illustrate the shift from optic vision to haptic practice.

The notion of haptic vision, from its first introduction by Aloïs Riegl (1858-1905) to its subsequent conceptual refinements by Wilhelm Worringer, Henri Maldiney and Gilles Deleuze, offers a powerful tool to describe the novel encounters with mountain scenery from the climber’s point of view. When applied to landscape, optic views are linked to distant features such as outline and panorama; haptic ones, instead, are rather concerned with near qualities such as texture and surface. If the optical provide us with a survey of distinguishable objects in deep space, the haptic allows us to find our way along or around a world made of variable surfaces, adding to our gaze – as Blanchot would put it – a ‘sort of touch’ (Blanchot 1981, 76). Riegl prefers the term ‘haptic’ to ‘touch’ (from the Greek *haptein* = to fasten), to enforce its synesthetic pertinence to sight and avoid any confusion with the actual tactile experience mediated through touch: ‘The optical manner of seeing stands back from the

world, withholds itself in and for survey, or surveillance ... the haptic, so fast (in both senses) in its fastening, is a form of attachment' (Trotter 2004, 39).

Haptic and optic vision, to reiterate, reveals something about the complex relationship between the hand and the eye – both of which are factors in the visual experience. In Ronald Bogue's (2003) discussion of Deleuze's use of Riegl and Maldiney, he aptly maintains that although

the simplest means of perceiving separate entities is through touch ... touch alone only yields information about individual points ... to comprehend entire objects, one must combine multiple touches through subjective consciousness and thought ... and a knowledge of objects as three-dimensional forms requires the subjective synthesis of multiple tactile and visual experiences of the entities' (Bogue 2003, 137).

Deleuze's theory of vision, therefore, is applicable to our purpose because it helps explain how the materiality of three-dimensional objects can be rendered and become an 'integrative system of knowledge' (Danvers 1995, 289) – whether that be a bas-relief sculpture, a landscape or a mountain.

In the particular case of the Dolomites and their prominent, naked, rough and jagged configurations, this knowledge allows us to focus on the subtle distinction between 'mountain climbing' and 'rock climbing'. We shall return to this idea later, but for now it is enough to suggest that the hand and the eye of the mountaineer reinforce one another in a fundamental way. Haptic gaze is a holistic system of environmental perception that going beyond visual spatial perception refers to a more complex geographical experience, involving 'the integration of many senses, such as touch, positional awareness, balance, sound, movement, and the memory of previous experiences' in a unified outlook (O'Neill 2001, 4).

Employing Sanger Davies as an exemplar of this midway point of dealing with landscape, between haptic and optic, is intended to satisfy some of the

tensions concerning the very relationship between reality and representation (Matless 1992), which are perhaps neglected in Cosgrove's earlier scholarship. *Dolomite Strongholds* reveals a highly textual, discursive engagement with the Dolomites, one that can be read simply as a landscape-text (Nettlefold and Stratford 1999, 130). But its haptic overtones make it something more than a landscape-text – Sanger Davies presents his readers with a way to see a landscape with the 'hands of the mind', a touching with the eyes through a tangible playful performance, which 'feels' reality with his own flesh and body. Filtered through a technology of touch, the Dolomites become real via a 'feeling with' that does not necessarily rely on the primacy of vision in its traditionally reduced construction (Paterson 2007).

The climber – and Sanger Davies with him – represents this hybridity, inhabiting a phenomenological middle ground between touch and sight, that is to say, between two of the classic inferences of landscape. But rather than seeing landscape, in this context, as a problem of duplicity (Olwig 1996 and 2008; Minca 2007c) we should begin to see it as an example of a 'shuttling through' landscape, where oppositions between vision and practice, between representation and embodiment, come together (Cosgrove 2003, 229); or, as Stephen Daniels puts it, 'we should beware of attempts to define landscape, to resolve its contradictions; rather we should abide in its duplicity' (Daniels 1989, 218). This duality allows us to consider the Dolomite landscape, in the sense proffered by Tom Mitchell, 'not just what landscape "is" or "means" but what it does, how it works as a cultural practice' (Mitchell 1994a, 1). Not only does *Dolomite Strongholds* provide a 'topographic experience ripe for retrospective critique', but, as David Matless puts it in relation to his early twentieth-century literary sources, it 'turns out to carry thought on landscape-mobility-practice to challenge, echo or surprise our own' (Merriman et al. 2008, 198).

In some ways, Sanger Davies allows us to depart from the Cosgrove or iconographic landscape perspective, as exposed in his seminal *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Cosgrove 1984). The iconographic approach certainly delves into the ground of a landscape, and, indeed, finds meaning below the surface of an image or text; Cosgrove established a particular 'way of seeing' and method for revealing meaning deposited 'below the surface of representation' (Cosgrove 1990, 3; Cosgrove and Daniels 1997). But, if we are going to understand how mountaineers, particularly British mountaineers, 'did' the Dolomites, we need to consider more closely the performative and material elements of vision, as something potentially akin to a seeing from within or 'seeing-with' the landscape (Wylie 2005 and 2006).

During the ascent of the Grosse Zinne we see again how haptic notions of visibility are forwarded as being crucial to Sanger Davies' perception of the mountain itself and his own corporeality. He writes that the climb afforded 'unrivalled exercise to mind, eye, nerve, and body. The mental combination of a resolution to progress, tempered by a suspicion which distrusts every foothold and hand-grip, is a fine training in patience and perception' (Sanger Davies 1894, 72). Likewise, on his ascent of the Langkofel, 'the chief thought suggested is, that such rock-climbing as this is the best possible sort of exercise for the co-ordination of mind and body. Every muscle of the whole frame is brought into play. It is an admirable discipline for the nerves, the will, and the mental-motive faculties generally' (*ibid.*, 175).

This kind of kinaesthetic engagement with rocks, operated by Sanger Davies' Dolomite climbs, is not, of course, alien to geography. There is a rich tradition that acknowledges and motivates such a somatic, dynamic way of being in, dealing with, and seeing landscape (Edensor 2000; 2010); and there are also scholarly accounts that relate this idea to mountaineering practices as well (Lund 2005; Colley 2009; 2010). Following Merleau-Ponty, for instance, Tim

Ingold emphasizes the moving and perceiving body within an approach to landscape that does not isolate the optic from the haptic, but rather brings them together 'in the very action of its involvement with the environment' (Ingold 2000, 262). With Ingold (2000; 2004), I suggest that Sanger Davies' gaze and sense of vision cannot be disconnected from the body that touches and feels the mountains he climbs with his muscles, cheeks or fingertips.

Through haptic practice Sanger Davies is able to create a vision of the Dolomites as if he were writing while climbing. The Dolomites acts here as haptic mountains that become culturally prominent. Concurring with Mark Paterson, who sees haptic practice a complementary and mutually supportive appendage to optical vision, Sanger Davies' embodied, even fossilized, encounter with the Dolomites 'helps to engender and, indeed, engineer both tangible and intangible feelings' (Paterson 2007, 12): for both himself and vicariously the readers of *Dolomite Strongholds*. Sanger Davies exemplifies here a compelling modality within the cultural rituals of Victorian mountaineering.

If he asks his readers to imaginatively extract the rock from the mountainous background of Titian's or Walton's canvases, feel it, play with it and somatically engage with it close-up, we could also suggest that his moving body is not just moving through space, but part of a landscape's creative energy (Crang 2001, 194). Sanger Davies allows us to evolve associations of prominence with the Dolomites culturally, in a still visual but haptic fashion, concurrent with Merleau-Ponty's important understanding of the body's action in landscape, for example, as an 'intertwining of vision and movement' (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 162). For both Merleau-Ponty and Sanger Davies, it would seem, 'vision is attached to movement' (*ibid.*).

Dolomite Close-Ups
Performative Snapshots

Distinct from the vocabulary of the Golden Age of Mountaineering, the haptic encounters of Sanger Davies with the Dolomite added to the Silver Age lexicon an nuanced component. If the Golden Age was about conquering peaks, a type of 'vertical colonialism' (Schama 1995), this was still partially about physicality: 'For passive observers, mountains had been associated with an expected emotional response which transcended the scene. Mountaineers experienced mountains through physical touch. Emotional associations were thus transformed by sensory perception. To call the mountaineers' aesthetic phenomenological does not do it justice – it was, in a literal sense, 'tactile, visceral, physical' (Hansen 1991, 219; 1995).

It would be, therefore, inaccurate to argue that a subjective approach to mountain landscapes was somehow lacking or without sophistication in the Golden Age (Chapter 3). Leslie Stephen, champion of the Golden Age mentality, expressed an attitude not too separate from the Byronic one, mostly popular in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, in *The Playground of Europe* (1871), suggesting that mountaineers, for instance, 'pursued an active interrogation of the land, turning it into a landscape by simultaneously immersing themselves in it and objectifying it as another space defined principally by human activities' (Kember 2003, 24).

Stephen's understanding of the Alps, both in his measurements and mental experience of them is a blurring between bodily encounter and subjective memory of landscape: 'If he [the mountaineer] is accessible to poetical influences ... he has opened up new avenues of access between the scenery and his mind' (Stephen 1871, 282). For Stephen, nonetheless, '*only* first hand experience of climbs, the more dangerous the better, actually conferred the right to describe "mountain truth", as Ruskin arrogantly called it' (Schama 1995, 504).

More nuanced and revealing, however, are the visual representations of the Dolomites in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly when compared to the visual renditions of alpine adventure emerging from the Golden Age. Take the example of Albert Smith's Mont Blanc Show and board game (see Chapter 3). These devices allowed both the audience at his Piccadilly show and the players of his game to imaginatively climb and even compete against each other 'up' Mont Blanc in the 1850s. While being metaphoric of Smith's ascent of Mont Blanc in 1851, these devices did not offer a tangible synecdoche, which Sanger Davies would be able to provide, as we shall see. Nor was Albert Smith able to fully express or render the notions of haptic vision or close-up encounter with mountain scenery.

Smith's show was purely visual, if captivating; and his board game, although requiring a kind of physical activity, did not hint at any of the deathly reality or bodily engagement that mountain climbing required – it was merely a parlour game. In the popular visual representations of the Dolomites at the time of Sanger Davies, however, we start to see a capturing and combining of the performative nature of mountain climbing with landscape in a way that begins to explicitly represent the haptic and close-up aspects of mountain landscapes described in this chapter. I call these types of Dolomite representations 'performative snapshots'.

Specific examples and genres of performative snapshots convey meanings and images of the Dolomite landscape, but transform them in accordance with altered 'ways of seeing' landscape that are highlighted here. Not only do they fuse image and materiality but also they begin reversing traditional, or let's say 'Enlightenment', ways of picturing landscape, which subordinated landscape 'as an area of land visible to the eye from a vantage point' (Cosgrove 2003, 253; 1984). The Dolomite art of a Elijah Walton represented the mountains from some privileged distance, and implied that observers of the Dolomites should

find some higher place, prospect, or dominant bird's-eye view, in alignment with the prescriptive canon of Murray's guidebooks (Appleton 1996, 22–25).

In performative snapshots, however, location and geographic space are no longer disconnected from the physical makeup of the landscape. The necessity of imagination, required to turn the backgrounds of Titian's canvases into real Dolomites, becomes less significant because in these images the geographic specificity and materiality of the Dolomites become much more pronounced or prominent. These performative snapshots are not simply about representing what is seen or imagined in the Dolomites, nor indeed are they just about the geological surface of the mountains; their haptic components promote an sophisticated depth of vision, and touch, that a superficial glancing at form and surface alone cannot achieve.

Part of this change in the matrix of representing and seeing the Dolomite landscape comes about through changing technologies of vision and capturing space. Sanger Davies, for example, for the first time in the sources so far consulted, makes use of photography. On the western face of the Croda da Lago he takes a photograph which gives 'a poor idea of both height and perpendicularity, but somewhat fairly represents the craggy wildness of this side' (Sanger Davies 1894, 22); several times throughout the account his 'Kodak' makes frequent 'snap-shots' of the terrain (*ibid.*, 27). Postcards, however, provide the main example here of the changing attitudes towards Dolomite representation and the popular method through which this was accomplished. Unlike the practice of going to the Birmingham Art Gallery, or to the exhibition at the German Gallery in London, to see Walton's Dolomite views, postcards are eminently more transportable landscapes in themselves than a painted canvas by Walton. Yes, Titian's art can travel, but movement is not part of its design or the way its imagery is to be consumed. Oppositely, postcards are hand-held objects, simple devices to transport imagery of one place to the another

relatively quickly and affordably, something to get physically close to, touch and engage with emotionally – presumably postcards are sent from friend to friend, relation to relation.

Postcards also allow popular access to geographies, spaces and locations, that high-art simply cannot – although it would be wrong to suggest that travel to the Dolomites in the late nineteenth-century was something readily available (so that the postcard could be sent in the first place) or that museum or gallery-going was some pan-class cultural practice which gave everybody a glimpse of the Dolomites. And postcards are still designed; their pictorial and photographic messages involve a level of selection, framing and composing of the landscape as in a painted picture, and are thus not as innocent as they might first appear. Postcards are, as Mike Crang puts it in relation to postcards of Bristol, part of an ‘iconographic manipulation of the landscape’ (1996, 429). Postcard imagery of the Dolomites also relies, for their symbolic effectiveness, on a recourse to supporting imagery and text, either provided through knowledge of Titian or other Dolomite artistic representations, for example, or by familiarity with Sanger Davies’ *Dolomite Strongholds* or other Dolomite travel writings discussed in previous chapters. They are a further addition to the Dolomite visual repertoire.

Haptic practice, or the performative nature of mountaineering, fits well with the idea of sending a postcard of the Dolomites because it necessarily involves, like climbing, spatial action; in the actual posting of a card, the sender is subconsciously, or even consciously, engaged with a performative feature of landscape or with at least one layer of its representation that moves through the physical world. The sending of a postcard becomes a clearly physical interaction ritual chain (Collins 2004), but also part of one chain whereby symbolism of the Dolomites takes on a further magnetism and transportability within new and popular, presentational-representational postcard formats. Crang (1996), again,

sees 'snapshots' of 'old Bristol' structuring an aesthetic palimpsest and a form of presentation of the city's cultural memory. Similarly, Dolomite postcards are helpful in reconstructing traces of symbolic meaning left behind by the material and imaginative circulation of different types of representations – here of the performative nature of the Dolomites.

This process arguably allowed the locality and geography of the Dolomites to gain significance for English postcard recipients and their senders, and helped the Dolomites acquire further momentum in becoming a place; one to see, travel to, or at least think about. The period offers up many types of Dolomite postcard, and their subject material is diffuse, so in the interest of the argument three distinctive genres of Dolomite postcard have been identified and shall be discussed now. These genres exemplify the general movement from panoramic depictions of the Dolomites to the presentation of an imagery revealing a series of close-up, haptic and embodied representations of mountains – a new way of visualising and appropriating the Dolomites. They provide a visual counterpart to the documentary and literary evidence discussed above; a counterpart that highlights the concepts and helps isolate the uniqueness and prominence of the Dolomites for their English admirers.

These distinctive genres of postcard, however, all emerge from views of landscape that are arranged along traditional lines, according to a practice diffused in the early examples of the genre (Woody 1998; Carline 1971). It is erroneous to imply, for example, that some postcards did not contain Claudian compositions, or indeed, portrayals of the Dolomites that were akin to the nineteenth century alpine views of Turner or Walton, views that applied classical landscape formulations to art, or even fail to miniaturize religious works found in Dolomite churches, including those by Titian. An extensive repertoire of Dolomite postcards, classified by location, has been recently

collected by Giuseppe Tomasoni (2001); the Museo Nazionale della Montagna in has produced equally comprehensive collections (Audisio 2010 and 2005).

The first genre of Dolomite postcard offers examples of what I would call here ‘synecdoctal close-ups’. In these representations magnified and zoomed-in portrayals of the Dolomites are observed; tiny parts of the landscape come to represent the whole of the Dolomites. In these ‘fragments’ of the natural landscape, close-up examinations of flora and fauna, typical of the Dolomites, are sent in postcard form. For example, only the description on the back of the postcard ‘*Alchemilla Alpina*’ (Fig. 7.6) tells the recipient that the flowers are indigenous to the Dolomites.



Fig. 7.6 - *Alchemilla Alpina*, postcard, 1915, Biblioteca della Montagna, Trento (BMT).

In the postcard *Marmolata* (Fig. 7.7, left), where only the very peak of the mountain is shown, the goal seems to be less about suggesting height, or cacographic prominence and scale, but more about the geological makeup of the mountain and its consequences for artistic rendition – its impact on light, for instance. The isolation of the peak, unaccompanied by any foregrounding features or surrounding geography, becomes even more suggestive in *Il*

Campanile Basso (Fig. 7.7, right) or *Rosengartengruppe* (Fig. 7.8), in which the focused upon peak itself is the singular message.



Fig. 7.7 - Left: *Marmolata*, postcard, 1920. Right: *Il Campanile Basso*, postcard, 1920, Biblioteca della Montagna, Trento (BMT).

The second distinctive genre concerns ‘metonymical close-ups’. In these postcards, images are linked to an idea of the Dolomites, not through direct representation, but by the substitution of the idea of Dolomites with something closely associated with them. For example, postcards of Dolomite peasants and indigenous people are sent, portraying them in their traditional attire, as in *Costume antico di Primiero* (Fig. 7.9, left). Archetypal Dolomite dwellings and the ubiquitous architecture of the Dolomites, as well, expressed both by agricultural buildings and church design, assumes a significance over the mountains seen in the background, for example, and through association take on an exchanged role as the Dolomites themselves – as witnessed in the postcards *Bozen, St Cyprian mit dem Rosengarten* (Fig. 7.9, right) or *Mattino sul Tonale* (Fig. 7.10). In these

cases, the picturesque element of a panoramic view is highlighted to the point of becoming the main subject of interest.

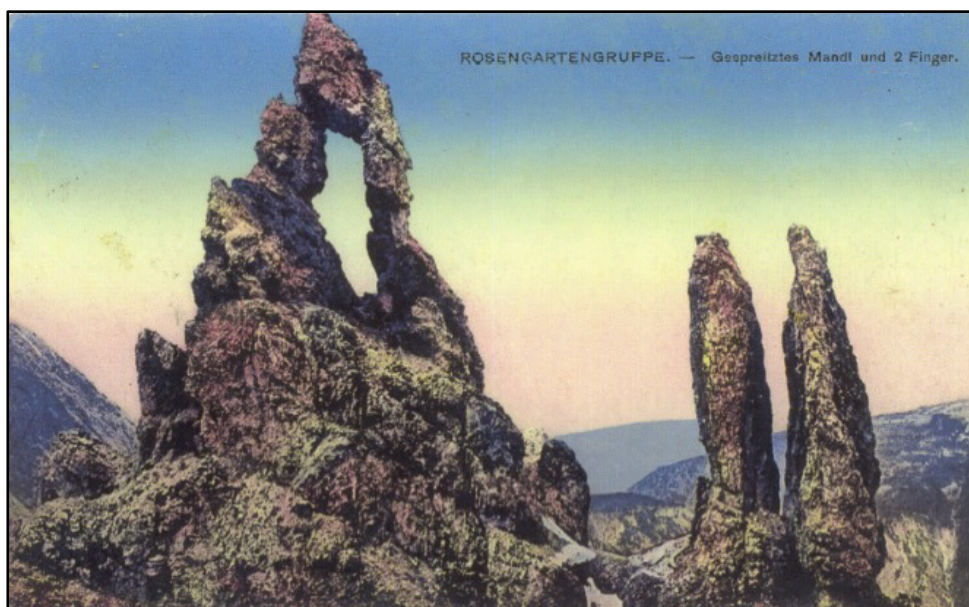


Fig. 7.8 - *Rosegartengruppe*, postcard, 1916, Biblioteca della Montagna, Trento (BMT).



Fig. 7.9 - Left: *Costume antico di Primiero*, postcard, 1910. Right: *Bozen, St. Cyprian mit dem Rosengarten*, postcard, 1904, Biblioteca della Montagna, Trento (BMT).



Fig. 7.10 - *Mattino sul Tonale*, postcard, 1916, Biblioteca della Montagna, Trento (BMT).

The third category, 'performative close-ups', suggest the embodied nature of being in landscape; in other words, mountaineering in the Dolomites, and visually represents the type of landscape viewing to which Sanger Davies explicitly adheres – literally on the face of the mountain. So, in *Kamin zur Cima Tosa* or *Salita al Cimone della Pala* (Fig. 7.11), one sees the mountaineer very much in action. In both examples, it is assumed that the protagonists are aiming to reach the summit; but these illustrations reveal more about the physicality of mountaineering than its ultimate motivations. Verticality and the life-endangering qualities of these photographed climbs are clearly felt by the precariousness of the mountaineers' position on the rock face, to which they plainly cling, and by the fact that rope is necessarily tied between them and the rock face. But importantly no summit is seen; they are performative snapshots in a singular episode of ascent where the raw mountain close-up is of greatest significance.

Dolomite Close-Ups

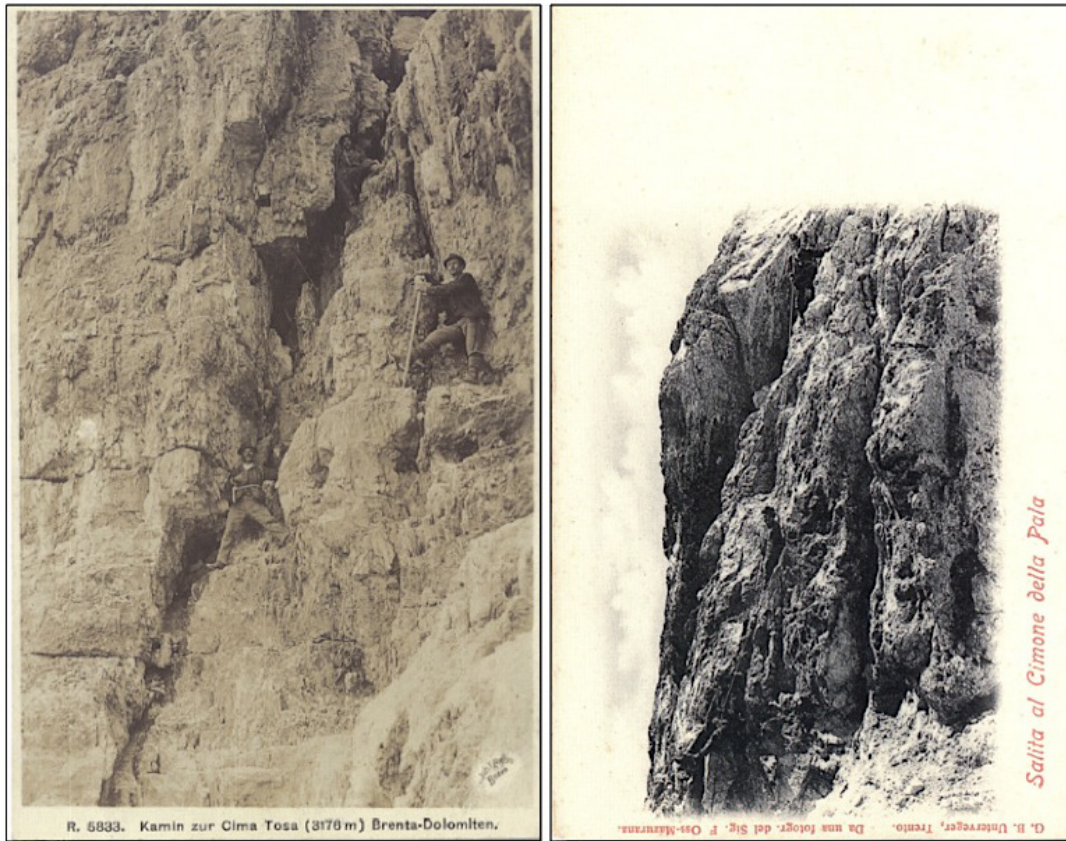


Fig. 7.11 - Left: *Kamin zur Cima Tosa (3176m) Brenta-Dolomiten*, postcard, 1902; Right: *Salita al Cimone della Pala*, postcard, 1902, Biblioteca della Montagna, Trento (BMT).

Other ‘performative snapshots’ throw up several more visual interpretations of the close up encounters argued for in this chapter. For instance, the notion of the haptic is still conveyed when whole or panoramic views are displayed. In *Dolomiten bei Madonna di Campiglio an der Bocca di Brenta* (Fig. 7.12) the individual peaks of this Dolomite group are highlighted by labelling so that even when a whole mountain range is shown, complete with a holistic impression of scale, prominence and geology, the peak itself, the very zenith of the mountain’s elevation, becomes the chief and curious feature of the image. In this example, the height of the mountains is accentuated by the vertical labelling but at the same time this textual inclusion focuses the attention on the tiny area of the summit itself, constituted by the width of a single letter rotated at ninety degrees. Text along the horizontal plane could, in this manner, somewhat erroneously imply, visually, that these summits are of a much greater area than

Dolomite Close-Ups

the author wishes to suggest. This card, with the height of the peaks being included, also alludes to a mountaineering expertise, accounting for a particular type of climbing, which necessitated some sort of scientific knowledge or knowhow.

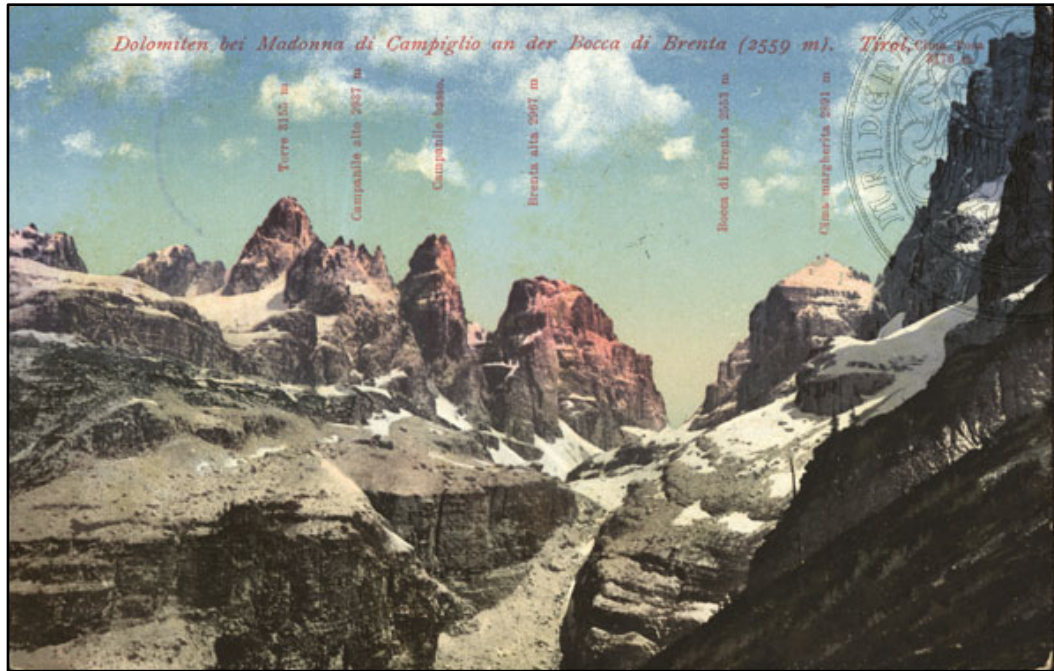


Fig. 7.12 - *Dolomiten bei Madonna di Campiglio an der Bocca di Brenia (2559m) Tirol*, postcard, 1910, Biblioteca Comunale, Trento (BCT).

Contrastingly to this example is the 1915 performative postcard *Tre ragazze in costume che raccolgono stelle alpine* (Fig. 7.13), in which the notion of verticality is still implied; and yet, unlike some of the traditional representations of ‘masculine’ upward mountain ascents, the direction of performance is clearly inverted – it is a performance operated downwards by women, a kind of ‘gendered’ sublime in a ‘picturesque’ setting. Dressed in a traditional attire that can hardly be considered proper to mountaineering, these women playfully engage with the Dolomite landscape, holding each other as well as to the landscape itself, similar the images of mountaineers hanging on to a rock face, as above. Here, however, the goal of their pursuit is not some triumphant

Dolomite Close-Ups

summit above, but instead the claiming of a delicate alpine flower, growing precariously in the rock below them, perhaps not far away from home.



Fig. 7.13 - *Tre ragazze in costume che raccolgono stelle alpine*, postcard, 1915, Biblioteca Comunale, Trento (BCT).

Sanger Davies' Guides

Close-up gazing, haptic practice and prominence are three interrelated notions, which reveal themselves in subtly different ways within the interaction between Dolomite mountaineers and their indigenous Dolomite guides (Camanni 1985; Gasparetto 2012, 23–42). Differently from previous mountaineers – such as

John Ball, for instance – who ‘used’ local guides without crediting them, Sanger Davies lingers profusely on their merit to enhance the level of difficulty of the task he describes. He explicitly admits that his ascents in the Dolomites would not have been possible without the skill and knowledge of his local guides, almost as if they were made of the same material of the mountains themselves. Sanger Davies’ guides, Angelo Zangiacomi, Antonio Costantini and Luigi Bernard (Fig. 7.14), belonged to a second generation of Italian alpine guides, active in the areas of Trentino and Cadore (Camanni 1985, 74). Their names were not unknown to British mountaineers; and by the time of Sanger Davies, it is quite possible that their service must have added an aura of prestige to an adventure in the Dolomites. If this was true for the guides made famous by their deeds in the Western Alps, such as François Joseph Dévouassoud, to whom Freshfield would dedicate his *Italian Alps* (1875), this was partially true also for the guides based in the Eastern Alps, who were often mentioned in the guidebooks of the Silver Age.⁴

Already alluded to in Amelia B. Edwards’ rambles in the Dolomites (1873), the mandatory role of the Dolomite guide is reinforced and comes to full fruition in Sanger Davies’ account of his difficult ascents. All other mountaineers and rock-climbers ‘could not compete’ with the local skill of the ‘Tyroler upon his own Dolomite rock’ (Sanger Davies 1894, 7). More correctly than so far suggested, *Dolomite Strongholds* is really the account of a ‘tourist’ or ‘amateur’, as Sanger Davies humbly refers to himself, making mistakes, ‘bungling and failing’ – an amateur, however, technically equipped. He is dependant on his guides to ‘make admirable arrangements’ in preventing him from playing, for example, the ‘part of a long pendulum grating across the hard bosom of that limestone precipice’ of the Croda da Lago (*ibid.*, 17); they are the ones ultimately responsible for his getting to the end of his, or better their, ascents.



ZANGIACOMI, CONSTANTINI AND THE AUTHOR.

Fig. 7.14 - Angelo Zangiacomi, Joseph Sanger Davies (sitting) and Antonio Costantini, photograph, 1894, from Sanger Davies (1894) 29.

The relationship with his guides, Antonio Constantini, on earlier climbs, and Luigi Bernard, on later ones, is a close one, not least because without a certain level of intimacy and mutual confidence, ‘catastrophe’ was considered ‘certain’ – the lives of each were literally in each other’s hands. Sanger Davies takes as much time to describe his guides as he ‘does’ the landscape. Of Constantini, his principal guide, he says in admiration:

this guide was the handsomest Italian I had yet seen. About twenty-three or twenty-five years old, just under six feet high, with broad shoulders, slim waist, very muscular limbs, he had the face of a dark Adonis, the features all well formed, even refined, flashing dark eyes, and a black moustache which curled back nearly to his ears’ (*ibid.*, 15-16).

On the Grosse Zinne climb, Sanger Davies describes how, at one point, ‘Constantini turned, and stood, like the Colossus, a foot on either side, while I climbed up and had no alternative but to crawl up behind him between his legs’

(*ibid.*, 74). We begin to see here that Dolomite mountaineering necessitated even a high level of intimacy between the bodies of the climbing party. It is in this close-up relationship between mountaineer and guide that the haptic again surfaces on the mountain, which itself assumes human features, such as the 'forefinger', 'thumb', or 'hand'.

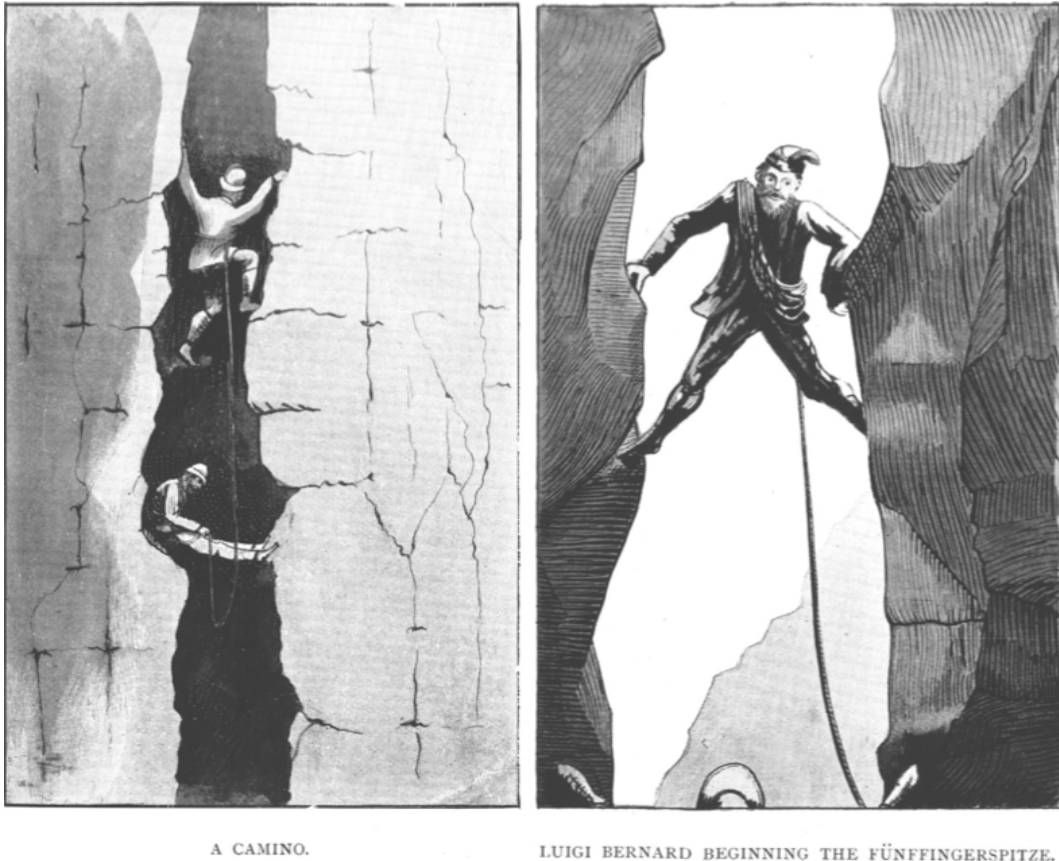


Fig. 7.15 - Left: *A Camino*; Right: Luigi Bernard Beginning the Fünffingerspitze, from Sanger Davies (1894, 48 and 130).

At one point Sanger Davies' guide clambered straight up the rock face so immediately above him that a fall would have been fatal for both (Fig. 7.15, right), for the strain of the two hundred feet of rope that physically connected them could not have stood the strain of so great a fall:

He was clambering so directly above me, however, that there seemed little chance of him falling anywhere else but upon my body, and that could not be removed ... Before he began the crawl he called me to

“attend to the rope” ... if he slipped, would plunge down thirty feet or so, and then the sudden jerk would pluck me irresistibly out of my hold and both would go to the bottom ... One hardly used the feet at all on this cliff, it was more a case of hugging the rock all the way up, snake-like or lizard-like, intruding the elbows, and sidling-in the knees, also keeping the head well in for balance sake, knowing all the way that the base of support was not fairly outside of the plumb-line of one’s weight, but helping it by such adhesion of limbs and chest, as grasp and friction of rock-surface afforded (*ibid.*, 131-139).

It is worthwhile adding to Sanger Davies’ account, some details of the mountaineering exploits of Ralph King-Milbanke (1839-1906), 2nd Earl of Lovelace, and grandson of the poet Lord Byron (Torchio 2009). These details add an extra level of complexity to the close-up model of intimate encounters between English mountaineers and their guides illustrated by Sanger Davies. They help explain, for example, the way in which the Dolomites decamped somehow, both symbolically and physically, to England, and further promoted the Dolomites as ‘prominent mountains’ for Victorian culture. The intensity of Lovelace’s relationship with his two Dolomite guides, Bortolo Zagonel and Michele Bettega (Fig. 7.16), begins to be revealed in this journal entry where Lovelace’s descriptions mix admiration for their skills with the danger averted by their presence:

Bortolo Zagonel was one of my two guides on the following ascents: July 26. 1899. The traversata of the Rosengarten up the eastern precipice and the formidable and lofty chimney in which it culminates, descending *via ordinaria* (‘ordinary way’).

July 27. 1899. Delago-Thurm. In both of these beautiful climbs, the best I know with only one expectation, Zagonel worked admirably and was of the utmost use. It is the simple truth that he is a brilliant climber, besides being thoroughly cautious and steady, and always in good spirits. I have

much pleasure in certifying that he is thoroughly capable of coping with every difficulty. Lovelace (FZA).



Fig. 7.16 - Giuseppe Zecchini (left), Bortolo Zagonel (centre) and Michele Bettega (right), Archivio SAT, Trento.

In Lovelace's memoir, published posthumously in 1920 by his wife Mary, the same ascents are accounted for in similar terms. But Mary makes an illuminating postscript to Lovelace's entry herself, which certainly corroborates the level of the interaction between the guides and her husband. In referring to her husband's account, she wrote:

'In all these excursions Bettega had the able co-operation of Bortolo Zagonel, and, as it is known to all mountaineers, the best guides have the best opportunity for their most brilliant work when associated with each

other. Bettega is now rich in experience and still in the prime of life. I have never known him employ more skill, strength and judgement than during the above-mentioned excursions. His eye for selecting the line of attack is perfectly marvellous, but is equalled by the resolution and resource with which he deals with the details as they arise. I have never known him completely baffled in any of the things we have undertaken together, and he has rarely had even to modify the original plan. I only have to add that I look forward to further expeditions in his company'. I have copied this because I want to add my own warm thanks to these two excellent fellows, his constant companions during those last years, who gave him many hours of happiness, and to whom, when his own strength and activity were beginning to fail, he must have many a time owed the safety of his life (Lovelace 1920, 126–127).

So close-up was this relationship between Lovelace and his Dolomite guides that they were both invited to Ashley Combe, Lovelace's home in Somerset, for a cliff-climbing extravaganza, as reported in his journal (7th of November 1903):

I have had the pleasure of a visit here from Bortolo Zagonel for five weeks. Zagonel has explored with me during his stay many of the steep places on these hills and been so good as to help in making paths amongst some of the least accessible places. Today I have to my great regret to take leave of him on his return home, but with the hope of many more excursions in his company (FZA).

On a second occasion, in 1905, both Zagonel and Bettega visited Somerset where Gertrude Bell, 'whose exploits as a climber are well known, came to help us to entertain these good fellows, and the whole party amused themselves' by making 'ascents' of the nearby 'rocks that fringe that portion of the Bristol Channel' while dressed in 'traditional' Dolomite attire (Lovelace 1920, 158). The Dolomites would seem to have come to England.

Returning now to Sanger Davies, *Dolomite Strongholds* comes to represent a lens through which notions of Englishness can be engendered in the Dolomites. Not only are Dolomite peaks compared to the 'great cathedral towers of England' (Sanger Davies 1894, 19), but they are the landscape upon which his 'memory of youthful scrambles on the cliffs of Britain' could be operated. The actual practice of mountaineering, on several occasions, is also couched in terms of a game of cricket. In addition to ordinary mountain wear, cricket flannels, we learn, are bizarrely useful clothing for Dolomite climbing and certain mountain sections, which are climbed, also assume the scale and proportion of a cricket field (*ibid.*, 164). Elsewhere, falling rocks are described as potentially fatal or of 'cricket ball-size' (*ibid.*, 168).

It is *Dolomite Strongholds*, however, which first opens up a second-tier of understanding, to be fully exemplified by the case of Gertrude Bell, Lovelace, Zagonel and Bettiga's climbs in Somerset. Upon the summit of the Kleine Zinne, for instance, Sanger Davies apparently deposits his name-card in the bottle positioned there (customary practice to let other climbers know of successful ascents), and 'clipped off' the highest point of the mountain so that it could become part of a lady's brooch back home in England (*ibid.*, 61). This crucial action not only elevates the rock itself to the level of a precious stone, but it attempts to symbolically charge the summit itself with both romance and a degree of portability.

I have already mentioned the idea of 'travelling landscapes', but it is worth lingering on this idea for a moment. Following Della Dora, Sanger Davies' brooch becomes a synecdochal device through which the idea of the Kleine Zinne's summit can be evoked by the materiality of the object, and a onto which the Dolomite landscape can be imaginatively projected – or becomes a tangible object through which 'landscape is laminated and through which it is transported, from place to place and from century to century' (Della Dora 2009,

340). The brooch is a haptic device for an optical encounter with the Dolomites, yes, but also a symbolic and geographic one, acted upon several countries-distance away. Here, the haptic becomes an abstracted, multisensory experience where a tiny fragment of rock can ‘impose the monolithic visual order’ of the Dolomite scenery (Paterson 2007, 64). It is the zooming-in close-up on the most localized of geographical scales – the very tip of a mountain – which allows it to be magnified improbably to the level of the universal or transnational (Ley 2004, 155); something innocuous to be transported overseas in the fabric of a humble piece of jewellery, or better geology, becomes more significant and symbolic than Sanger Davies might have at first realized. This process inverts what Gertrude Bell would call, less than a decade after *Dolomite Strongholds*, Dolomite ‘mountaineering in miniature’.

Ideas of the Dolomites ‘coming to England’, though, is reiterated and reinforced in the case of Gertrude Bell and Lovelace, as well as Zagonel and Bettega’s coming to England to dress-up and climb the Somerset coastal cliffs as if they were Dolomites. Turning to Bell, however, I do not want to dwell on her impact on the feminist historiography of geography, but rather on her mountaineering exploits, particularly in the Dolomites, which are certainly less well known and seldom accounted for (Domosh 1991; Stoddart 1991). Bell’s mountaineering in the Dolomites adds a further feminine dimension to a landscape already feminized in the silver age of mountaineering by characters such as Amelia B. Edwards and Elizabeth Fox Tuckett. Her letters and diaries reveal that she too had a close-up engagement with the Dolomites and her alpine guides; of Ulrich, for instance, her main guide, she said that ‘he is the best man I have ever seen on the mountain’ (GBA Letters 1901/09/31). Bell also seems to be familiar, like Sanger Davies, with the cultivated visual repertory of the Dolomites, and of Titian and his strong connection to the Dolomites, undoubtedly informed by the writings of Anna Jameson or John Ruskin (GBA,

Diaries 1896/03/23), but surely also by Josiah Gilbert's *Cadore or Titian's Country* (1869). Writing to her mother from Belluno, she extols the beauty of her view: 'It's perfectly heavenly – a real Titian landscape out of my windows, I'm going to look for the Madonna and the yellow robed St Catherine who are sitting, I feel sure, somewhere between the tall closely trimmed hedges of the garden' (GBA Letters 1900/10/21), with a clear reference to Gilbert's favourite Titian, *The Aldobrandini Madonna* (see Fig. 5.6).

Apart from Bell's closeness of eye within her descriptions of the mountains she climbs and from her accounts of her relationship with her guides, we could read these accounts as simply part of the Grand Tour's conventions. For instance, she admits convincingly that from Monte Berico, near the classic Grand Tour destination of Palladian Vicenza, 'we had a lovely view up to the Alps with a crimson sunset behind them on one side (more beautiful in outline, I think, than at Verona) and the Venetian plain on the other with one or two low but abrupt hillocks between us and Verona' (GBA Diaries 1896/03/23). But it has to be added, albeit taking her unique and often discussed persona aside, that Bell actually climbed these mountains the first place, when mountaineering was still the preserve of men; women more fittingly rambled, sketched or zigzagged as suggested by Edwards' *Untrodden Peaks* (1872) and Tuckett's *Zigzagging amongst Dolomites* (1871). Sanger Davies mentions his pleasant surprise, for instance, when he discovered that the most impossible route up the Fünffingerspitze had been successfully claimed by a Mrs Helversen only twelve days after his own ascent – to think it not possible was aptly 'vain speculation!' (Sanger Davies 1894, 122). So, it was not customary to find female mountaineers ascending difficult mountains in the later Victorian period such as Bell clearly did.⁵

We find, in fact, in the writings of Bell, a clear understanding and absorption of golden age rhetoric when she expressed a hunger for claiming and

conquering peaks: ‘These things are very like Dolomites [the Swiss Alps] and it's about the only place in Switzerland where you can find virgin peaks. There are half a dozen more of these nameless and unclimbed; if we were here another week we would have a shot at them all’ (GBA Letters 1901/08/31). Bell, interestingly, but perhaps in an effort to counteract the affect of her perceived gender role, strikingly takes mountaineering in her stride: ‘It was the greatest fun, very difficult rock work, but all quite short’, she said accounting of one ascent (while between mountain ascents she would take some time to play cricket near the Engelhorn), ‘we hammered in nails and slung ropes and cut rock steps – mountaineering in miniature’ (GBA Letters 1901/09/28). Again, ‘mountaineering in miniature’ is a revealing helpful phrase here. The miniaturization process of the Dolomites, expressed both in Bell’s haptic practice and optic vision, gave agency to the symbolization process of the Dolomites. This agrees with Bruno Latour’s formulation whereby knowledge about the world is ‘packed’ up and circulated through material objects to become a ‘thick layering of *transverse* paths through which masses of transformations circulate (Latour 1999, 133; 2004). Elsewhere, Bell alludes to the notion of subjective prominence, motivating Latour’s circulatory effect, with regard to the Dolomites when she is elsewhere in the Alps. In Austria, for instance, her topic of conversation is not about the mountains she finds there, but rather she concerns herself with talking ‘much about the Dolomites’ and Dolomite flowers instead (GBA Diaries 1895/08/27). Further afield, in India, this prominence is enhanced again because the landscape reference is clearly ascribed to the Dolomite landscape – the superlative landscape against which to contrast and compare all others: ‘The Ghants [sic] rather disappointing, except for curious broken rocks like Dolomites’ (GBA Diaries 1902/12/16).

In the previous chapter, the Lake District is explained as a paradigmatic landscape for travelling to and visual encounters with the Dolomites from

England. Here, with Bell, the haptic prominence of the Dolomites means that they become also a 'playground', or rather a 'training ground', for Britain's imperial endeavours in far-flung areas of the world, including India and Persia, and become a referential landscape in the making of modern nation like Iraq, for example (Howell 2006; Lukitz 2006 and 2004) – a different kind of mid-ground.

The tangible practice of mountaineering promotes here a recirculation of intangible symbols within Victorian culture. Encapsulated within haptic vision, the Dolomites become in some way a self-sufficient idiom in the English vocabulary, meaning more than just the Venetian Alps. The Dolomite fragment cast in Sanger Davies' brooch does not only represent a synecdoche of the ragged, colourful and spectacular mountains, but a metonymy for a particular kind of English mountain experience that English climbers start discovering also elsewhere – be it the cliffs of Somerset or the peaks of India and Persia – to the point of tainting also the encounter with already conquered Swiss Alps. The experience itself becomes transportable and felt through the mediation of others – Gertrude Bell could accept to see her name associated with an unclimbed peak as a gesture of friendship. In 1902, Lovelace presented Bell with an intangible gift in the form of a Dolomite peak named in her honour, which she cordially accepted: 'I have a letter from Lord Lovelace saying that he has called a peak after me in the Dolomites!' (GBA Letters 1902/08/05). The Gertrudespitze, in the Puez Group, still bares her name today. Such naming practices are certainly textual representations of landscape; and no better practice personalises the experience of a landscape than naming a mountain (Taylor 2006). But it is through these intimate practices, such as the toponomastic act of baptising a mountain with a proper name, that materiality and performativity interlace, allowing the Dolomites to become symbolically

‘prominent’, as a highly charged trope ready to circulate and recirculate across time and space, independently from its original source.

Both visual and documentary evidence included in this chapter point towards a changing outlook in being in and looking upon the Dolomite landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today the notion of technical and objective prominence is readily ascribed to the Dolomites, but for English mountaineers in this period, including the likes of Gertrude Bell and Joseph Sanger Davies, mountain prominence is operated in a novel way. This approach relied on a new sense of close up vision, here helpfully clarified by the idea of the haptic, and it presented a development in the way in which one could encounter the Dolomites; a development that was clearly different from admiring a Dolomite panorama by Elijah Walton or rambling in the landscape itself in a fashion proposed by Amelia B. Edwards. These approaches to landscape further helped elevate the prominence of the Dolomites, not only in its objective sense, but also subjectively – as a reservoir of particular cultural capital and subjective symbolism. The type of vision emerging here is less about the ocular than one enhanced by tactile and performative features, which becomes in the accounts of this period significantly more pronounced. Sanger Davies’ *Dolomite Strongholds* shows how he himself somehow becomes part of the mountain itself; he is fossilized in its very geological matrix within a ‘firma loca’, for example. The personal relationships between English mountaineers and their local guides, as well, also take on close up-like attributes.

Close up, haptic ways of encountering the Dolomites were transferred and disseminated back and forth between Italy and England not only through the publication of mountaineering accounts, but also by ‘synecdoctal’ devices such as Sanger Davies brooch, for instance, and Lovelace’s naming of a peak in honour of Gertrude Bell. Dolomite postcards of the period are helpful, additionally, in providing a visual counterpoise to the arguments made by the

literary and textual material consulted. These performative snapshots are important for the literal circulation of imagery as well as for the dissemination of both ideas about these concepts and the Dolomites more generally. Dolomite postcards are ephemeral cultural artefacts but are potentially crucial for the transportation and recirculation of symbolism between the Dolomites and England, especially at the level of the popular and everyday. They are certainly material objects, but are also inherently mobile and inexpensive devices whose imagery is able to 'function within a cultural code [and] to transfer symbolic meanings about places to a particular audience' (Waitt and Head 2002, 320).

For my purposes, Dolomite performative snapshots are employed here as discourses about the concepts touched upon in this chapter in their own right, rather than simply being visual representations of the haptic or of 'doings'. Acknowledging the idea that postcards literally 'travelled', and physically transported images of the Dolomites to their English recipients across space, we can venture to speculate that they were also central to an experience of moving-through landscape as they simultaneously revealed elements of the symbolic and emotional content of the Dolomite landscape (Hawkins 2011, 466). In this way, ideas, embodiments and performances of the Dolomites were able to dislocate themselves from their territory proper and circulate, instead, in the minds, eyes and hands, even, of their English devotees. Postcards are one technology for landscaping the Dolomites in this period and convey and summarize a new sense of being-in landscape, close up, tactile and zoomed-in (Merriman and Webster 2009).

The fact that Dolomite postcards only start emerging in this period is also telling. Their material introduction bear witness to the surfacing of the Dolomites, in this moment, as a mainstream touristic destination; postcards are tangible evidence of a tourist gaze and are a technology of its promotion. In this fashion, the Dolomite performative snapshots arguably helped shape touristic

practices and guide the touristic gaze, which may or may not have necessarily taken place so innocently. Postcards circumscribe, for instance, how, what and from where one should gaze upon a given landscape (Crang 1996 and 1997). This shaping of touristic practice involves, according to Macnaghten and Urry (1998), 'a possessive gaze', because postcards privilege the viewer over the viewed through the selective composition and framing of the landscape represented. There are early Dolomite postcards which, in a similar way, clearly and proscriptively mark out the 'recommended' routes or trails one 'should' take in order to reach some Dolomite peak.

In this period we also see images of hotels, roads, train lines, cable cars and ski lifts being introduced in postcards for the first time as they become ubiquitous features of a Dolomitic tourist destination and itinerary. The examples above, however, as visually pleasing as they may or may not be, inform the postcard recipient about something the producer of the image (or the sender) wants to achieve – controlled images, which are harnessed and exploited. Looking back at the examples we see that each one portrays the Dolomites, or smaller objects that come to represent the Dolomites in their entirety, with imagery that is saturated with symbolic coding. Unsurprisingly, then, they all represent 'exotic, cute, beautiful, or primitive' qualities in some way (Waite and Head 2002, 235) – features of a romanticized yet charged landscape to be discovered, discussed and focused upon.

Accounts of close up, performative encounters with both the nature and culture found in the Dolomites in the latter part of the nineteenth century modifies the picturesque gaze, and indeed the affect of the sublime, witnessed in both textual and visual materials of a earlier generation. The sources consulted in this chapter reveal a more intimate relationship with both the mountains themselves and the Dolomite people. But I do not wish to claim that this acted to eradicate the 'aesthetic landscape' or 'romantic gaze', to borrow Urry's (1990)

often-cited terminology. The concepts discussed in this chapter, instead, add to and complicate the practices of the English appreciation of the Dolomites. Nature was still to be gazed upon by Sanger Davies, for example, picturesquely, even, from mountaintops and so on. But by increasing the requirement of physical engagement with the mountains and combining this with touristic, scenic sightseeing, only first disseminated completely at the end of the nineteenth century, one may conclude that any priority given to sensing landscape through vision must also consider multiple sensory and emotional inputs. Only when we account for these things – the touch of the mountaineer's finger and foot and the friendships had with local guides – it is possible to render and gaze upon a fuller picture.

Notes

¹ By the time of Sanger Davies, in fact, many of the Dolomite peaks had already been conquered, as correctly remarked in the favourable 1894 review of *Dolomite Strongholds* in *The Morning Post*: ‘it is rather refreshing to find an author who comes to them [i.e. the Dolomites] with all the enthusiasm of a new discoverer, and who describes the special characteristics of rock climbing in the Dolomites as if he were the first that ever burst upon those silent hills’ (August 31, 1894, 6).

² The prominence of Mt. Everest, as the highest mountain in the world, is conventionally equal to its elevation, and provides the ultimate reference for the most prominent mountains worldwide; in the qualified context of the Alps, the reference peak is of course the Mount Blanc; in the one of the Dolomites, the parent mountain is the Marmolada.

³ Despite his membership in the Alpine Club, the London institution neglected the sensational ascents in the Dolomites by the London-born Ludwig Norman Neruda (see Neruda 1899), son of the acclaimed Moravian violinist Wilma Neruda (1838-1911) and of the Swedish musician Ludvig Norman (1831-1885); Abraham’s endorsement is linked with his rock-climbing style (Gasparetto 2012, 212), which he shared with the Italian cragsman Leone Sinigaglia, whose *Ricordi alpine nelle Dolomiti* (1892) were translated in English as *Climbing reminiscences of the Dolomites* (1896), as a model of modern mountaineering.

⁴ See for instance, Norman Neruda (1899, 13-14, 102), mentioning Luigi Bernard; or Sam Hield Hamer (1926, 160), who credits him and his porter to have opened new ways: ‘the Felsenweg, which avoids the obere and which was discovered in 1892 by the guide Luigi Bernard and the porter Giuseppe Davarda is now usually followed’.

⁵ Schama (1995) has provided some other notable female exceptions to the rule of male-dominated Victorian mountaineering in the classic sense of the practice explained by Hansen (1995), see Chapter 3.



CHAPTER 8

King Laurin's Garden

King Laurin's Garden is a land of magic, enclosed by peaks like frozen flames. It was long held an impenetrable and enchanted country: mystery surrounded it, and the splendid terror of its pinnacles.

— Reginald Farrer

During the late Victorian and early Edwardian periods, the Austrian tourist industry conquered the Dolomites. New spectacular roads, among the most admired in Europe, flanked with first-class hotels and illustrated with detailed tourist guides, changed the panorama of the region, annexing it culturally to the Imperial House of Habsburg. The model to follow was Switzerland, and the clientele to target the High Society of Mitteleuropa. The Dolomite districts, regardless of their ethnic specifications, became part of Tyrol – a politically unified territory granted with some degree of autonomy within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and traversed by the geographical frontier separating the Italian peninsula from the rest of the continent. The peaks of the Dolomites could not be called ‘untrodden’ anymore and their valleys not ‘unfrequented’ – Tyrol became a ‘bad Switzerland’ (Elliot 1870, 353).

This chapter deals with the British reaction to this epochal turn that saw the Dolomites ideally disappearing from the background of Venice to become a

fashionable holiday destination for the Austro-German elite. British travellers, who had promoted the Dolomites as a 'new playground', distinct from the 'old playground' represented by the Western and Central Alps, lost their exclusive access to the region. The loss of this exclusivity transformed itself into a nostalgic claim over the real 'soul' of the Dolomite landscape, threatened by Austrian encroachers. The debatable character of the region became then palpable. Within that debate the British voice played a rather peripheral role in the relational and contextual 'production of locality' of that particular land (Appadurai 1996; Jones 2010, 218–220). The British had lost their last Arcadia; to their eyes, its beautiful landscape could only be admired in the form of a miniaturized in a rock garden at home.

Debatable Peaks

In introducing his well-informed lecture on 'The Southern Frontiers of Austria' to the members of the Royal Geographical Society (1915), Douglas W. Freshfield (1845-1934, see Brown and Butlin 2004) – president of the Society (1914-1917) and former president of the Alpine Club (1893-1896) – could not forbear evoking 'the reasoned opinion' once exposed by Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), one of the acknowledged pioneers of political geography (Farinelli 2000; Mikesell 1978). In a short article on the political subdivision of the Alpine regions, Ratzel defended the view that the so-called 'Southern Alps' were wholly Italian (Freshfield 1915, 415):

It must not be overlooked that the Swiss Central Alps are not flanked by a developed South Alpine System such as that which first rises to importance in the Bergamasque Alps. This constitutes a distinct Italian Alpine land, which extends through the Brescian, Vicentine, and Venetian Alps to the western slopes of the Julian Alps. The Western Alps Italy shares with France; the Central Alps with Switzerland; the Southern

Alps, where they stand out as an independent group, are wholly Italian ('ganz Italienish').¹

One year after the outbreak of World War I, in a period that had already witnessed the beginning of the conflict between the Kingdom of Italy and the Austrian Empire for the renegotiation of their Alpine frontiers, Freshfield's choice could not have been more polemical. Not only was Ratzel one of the fathers of political geography, and therefore an absolute authority in the field, not only was he German, but his article was published in the official journal of the German-Austrian Alpine Club ('Zeitschrift des Deutschen und Oesterreichischen Alpenvereins').²

Unlike the British Alpine Club, with its restrictive membership requirements, the *Alpenverein* had adopted a rather universal ethos towards mountaineering, welcoming members from all social strata of the population (but excluding Jews and socialists) and thus functioning as the symbolic site for gathering different mountain identities under the all-inclusive rubric of German *Heimat* (Holt 2008, 5; for the relevance of *Heimat*, see Jacobson 2003; Confino 1997; Applegate 1990; Pasinato 2000; Boa and Palfreyman 2000; Blickle 2004). As aptly documented by Lee Wallace Holt, the outburst of World War I intensified this approach and spurred the *Alpenverein* to transform the role of the German mountaineer 'from a physically powerful, nature-loving individual to a thoroughly nationalist, militarized defender of the *Heimat*', qualifying itself as 'an organization dedicated to the production of an invincible, masculine Germany' (Holt 2008, 26). One of the privileged fields in which this new turn could fully express itself was the Austrian district of South Tyrol, which at that time also included the Italian district of Trentino.

Given the context, Freshfield's political rigidity to accept the Austrian position in that debate ('the Austrian Government has no longer recognized "the Trentino" as political expression', Freshfield 1915, 421) needs to be evaluated

by bearing in mind the cultural reservations with which he judged the mountaineering style of an institution that, by then, had already become the largest Alpine Club in the world and, therefore, a powerful rival of London's Alpine Club, characterized by its elitist interpretation of mountaineering (see Chapter 3). Not only Freshfield motivated his political defence for the Italianness of the Trentino through a detailed discussion of the historical, geographical and ethnographic criteria circulating in the debates of his time, but he buttressed his argument through his first-hand experience of the region as traveller and mountaineer (Gasparetto 2012, 74–78); an experience that distinct from the one embodied by the members of the *Alpenverein* entailed an aesthetic gaze established and nurtured by British mountaineers through their particular travel practice.

Forty years before, in a humorous page of his *Italian Alps* (1875), Freshfield had already drawn a clear line between the German and the English interpretations of mountaineering, acknowledging the open competition between the two respective nations:

The races of English and German mountaineers, after making due allowance for the exceptions which there are to every rule, will be found respectively to embody many of the characteristics of the two nations. Our Alpine Clubman affords while in the Alps an example of almost perpetual motion ... He dashes from peak to peak, from group to group, even from one end of the Alps to the other, in the course of a short summer holiday. Exercise in the best of air, a dash of adventure, and a love of nature, not felt the less because it is not always on his tongue, are his chief motives. A little botany, or chartography (sic), may come into his plans, but only by the way and in a secondary place. He is out on a holiday and in a holiday humour (Freshfield 1875, 182-183).

The speedy pace of the British mountaineer functions here as a trope for 'lightness' – lightness of spirit ('more bad jokes than valuable observations'),

lightness of equipment ('climbers ... can afford to laugh uphill – a power which is freely used, even at moments when the peasant who carries the provision sack is appealing audibly to his saints'), and lightness of goals ('utterly devoid of serious aim or importance'). And while the German mountaineer 'continues to revolve like a satellite, throwing considerable light on the mass to which he is attached, round the Ortler or the Marmolata ... his English rival dashes comet-wise, doing little that is immediately useful' (*ibid.*, 184).

The proposed comparison recycles here the distinction between an old-fashioned dilettante, who cultivates an area of interest without real commitment of knowledge, amused by the company of a 'congenial friend' and secured by the competence of 'one first-rate guide', and a modern scientist working on a field-work, seriously committed to make a significant contribution to the advances of knowledge and for the benefits of his own country and professional affiliation:

Far different is the scheme and mode of operation of the German mountaineer. To him his summer journey is no holiday, but part of the business of life. He either deliberately selects his 'Excursions-gebiet' (sic) in the early spring with a view to do some good work in geology or mapping, or more probably has it selected for him by a committee of his club. About August you will find him seriously at work. While on the march he shows in many little ways his sense of the importance of his task. His coat is decorated with a ribbon bearing on it the badge or decoration of his club. He carries in his pockets a notebook, ruled in columns, for observations of every conceivable kind, and a supply of printed cards ready to deposit on the heights he aims at (*ibid.*, 183-184).

The distinction becomes even clearer when the reciprocal outcomes of their endeavours are examined. If the British mountaineer, once back home, 'hurries off in the intervals of other business a ten-page paper for the "Alpine Journal"' (*ibid.*, 183), nothing more than a 'ridiculous mouse of a flippant article' (*ibid.*,

185); the German one produces 'a solid monograph, properly divided into heads, "orographical, geological, botanical, and touristical," ... published in the leading geographical magazine of Germany' and 'followed by a thick volume, printed in luxurious type, and adorned with highly coloured illustrations and a prodigious map, most valuable doubtless, but, alas! to weak English appetites somewhat indigestible' (Fig. 8.1).³

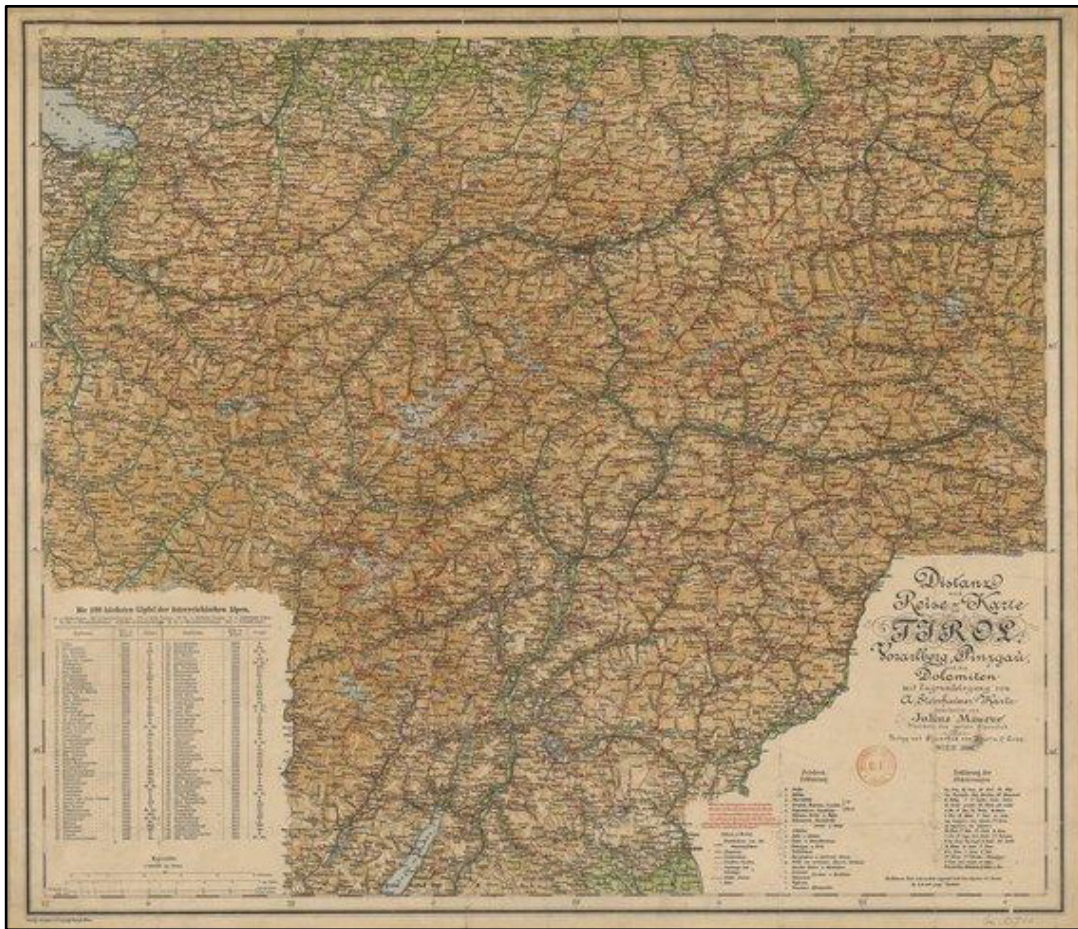


Fig. 8.1 – Anton Steinhauser and Julius Meurer, *Distanz und Reise-Karte von Tyrol, Vorarlberg, Pinzgau und den Dolomiten*, Vienna: Artaria, 1886, Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris.

The real reason, however, behind this clearly stereotypical characterization seems to be another. Despite the witty, if not sarcastic, tone – utterly impossible to be replicated in 1915 – Freshfield vigorously contested the inclusion of the Trentino within the 'German Alps':

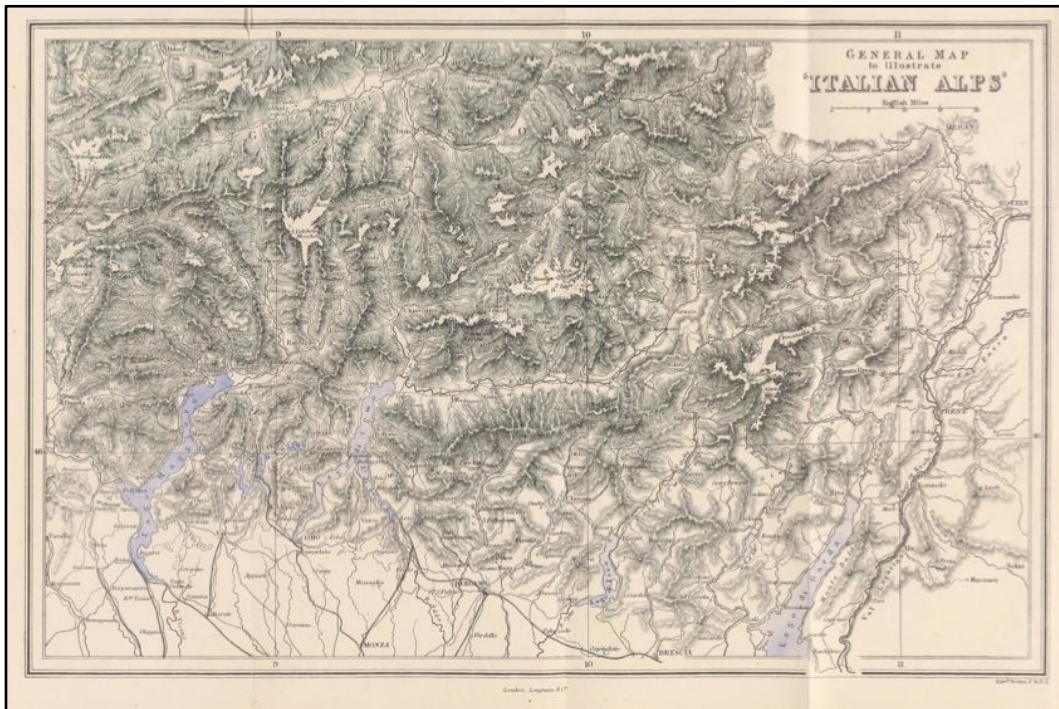


Fig. 8.2 – Douglas W. Freshfield, *Map of the Italian Alps*, 1875.

The exertions of our German fellow-climbers can, however, scarcely justify the annexation of the district calmly carried out by one of their writers. 'In all our German Alps,' says a learned doctor, 'there is hardly a more forsaken or unknown corner than the Adamello.' 'In unseren Deutschen Alpen!' There is not in the whole Alps a region which is more thoroughly Italian than the mountain-mass of which the Presanella is the highest, the Adamello the most famous, summit ... The mountains of the Trentino may be still, politically speaking, Austro-Italian Alps; in every other respect they belong entirely to the southern peninsula (Freshfield 1875, 185-186).⁴

By 1915, the expression 'unsere Deutschen Alpen' ('our German Alps') had already mutated into a claim that gave political weight to the open conflict over the frontiers between Italy and Austria. The Austrians not only claimed the Trentino as part of their own territory, but also the Ampezzo Valley, with

Cortina (Freshfield 1915, 433) – the geographical and cultural background of Titian's Cadore.

The comments included at the end of Freshfield's lecture offer a good picture of the political climate of the time (for an overview, see Guiotto 2006). James Bryce (1838-1922, see Harvie 2004) – eminent diplomat, member of the House of Lords and former president of the Alpine Club (1899-1901) – framed the question with an intensity commensurate to the critical situation of the moment:

I don't think I have ever listened to a more interesting lecture, or one which was more judiciously directed to matters of present importance than that which [Freshfield] has given us. I can only wish that he had had an audience of all the historians and all the soldiers – generals, colonels, and General Staff, in this country, as well as geographers – because there is no part of Europe more significant now than this Alpine line where Italian and Germans and Slavs of all kinds have to come into contact, and none which is more interesting to the soldier in respect to the opportunities of studying the peculiarities of mountain warfare which have arisen along this line. What the president has said about the difficulty of drawing an ethnological frontier of demarcation between the Italian and German population along the whole country from the eastern border of Switzerland as far as the place where the Slavonic population begins to come in to the north and west of Trieste, seemed to me, as far as I can judge from the observations I made in travelling about the country, to be exactly correct (Freshfield 1915, 435).

But the difficulty of adopting an 'ethnological' criterion to draw a political frontier between Austria and Italy was further complicated by the presence, in the Dolomite district, of 'two very interesting valleys lying between the Italian and German speaking parts [Grödnertal/Val Gardena/Val Gherdëina and Gadertal/Val Badia] whose inhabitants speak neither Italian nor German, but a

very ancient form of Romansch, which people themselves call Ladin' (Bryce, *ibid.*, 435).

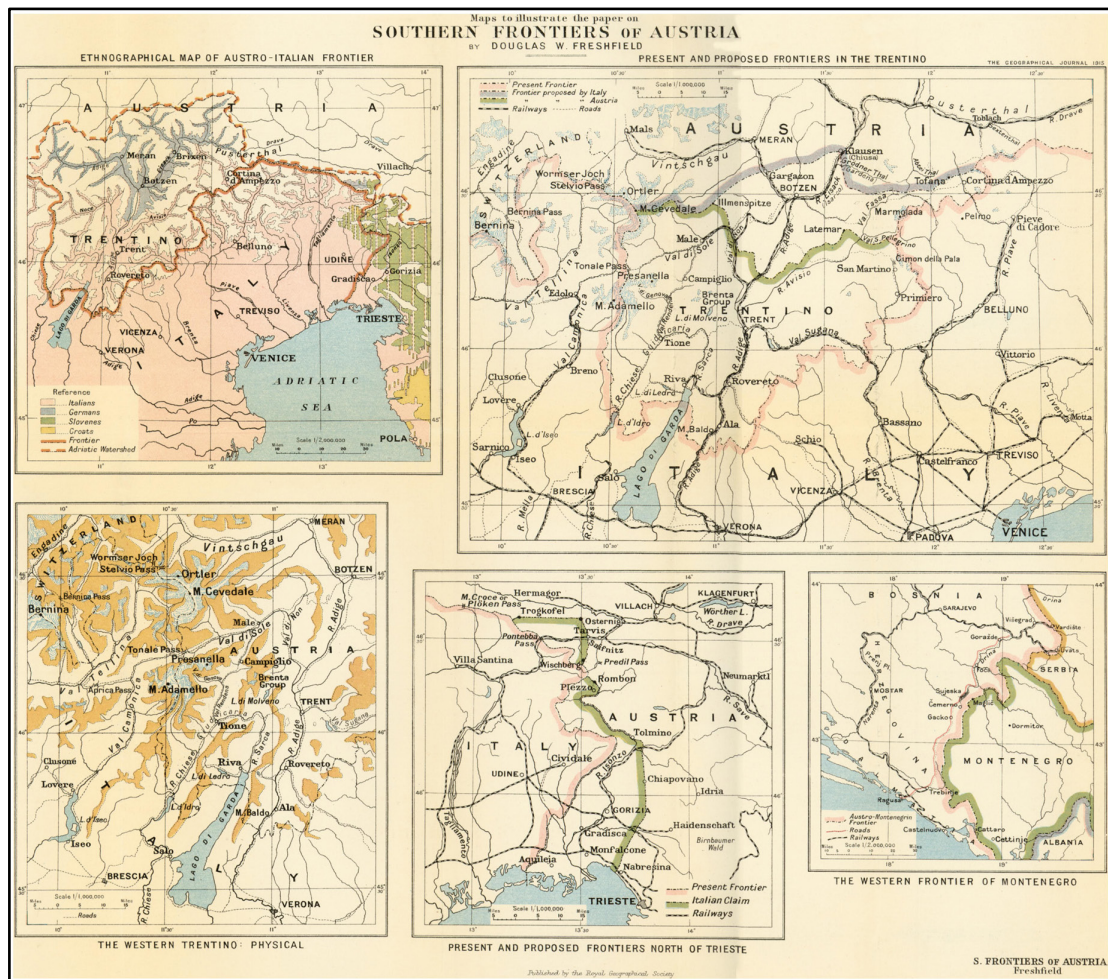


Fig. 8.3 - Douglas W. Freshfield, *Southern Frontiers of Austria*, 1915, from Freshfield (1915).

Freshfield did not consider them in drawing the *Ethnographical Map of Austro-Italian Frontier* (Fig. 8.3 to be compared with Fig. 8.2); but, in dealing with them, together with the neighbouring Fassa and Ampezzo Valleys, in which the degree of linguistic hybridity was supposedly even higher, he categorically excluded their 'geographical' annexation to Austria (Guglielmi 2009). Showing to be well acquainted with the most recent documentation, he sharply rejected the 'remarkable statement' that the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister of the time, Baron Stephan Burián von Rajecz (1851-1922), had just made to the

Italian Ambassador in Vienna (16 and 25 April 1915): 'the population of Val Fassa and Ampezzo [is] not Italian but Ladinian, and attached to Austria with all the strength of its soul' (*ibid.*, 421). Not only Freshfield stressed the Latin roots of the language spoken by their inhabitants, roots that would make them rather akin to the Italians, but he also vehemently discarded their 'Teutonic affinity' (*ibid.*):

The Ampezzo district, if once Ladin, is now practically Italian ... and as to 'soul' – well, perhaps our enemies are hardly in a position to ask us to accept their judgement on questions of soul (*ibid.*).

Against Austria ('our enemies'), Freshfield defended the Italian claims, which, besides Trentino, also ascribed to Italy the German-speaking city of Bozen/Bolzano.

To clarify the complexity of the debate, Freshfield exposed four main criteria for determining the legitimacy of the proposed frontiers. His discussion strikingly mirrors the four models recently proposed by Richard Stauber to situate historically the imaginary border between Germany and Italy (Stauber 1998, 81–115). In the following, Stauber's factors of discrimination are summarised with reference to Freshfield's discussion put into parenthesis: (1) the hydrographical watershed along the direction of streams flowing into the Adriatic (Freshfield 1915, 420); (2) the administrative frontier between the Bishopric of Trent (Italy), comprising Bozen/Bolzano, and the Bishopric of Brixen/Bressanone (Austria), acknowledged by Napoleon in 1810 (*ibid.*, 419); (3) the Italian-German linguistic divide, traditionally localised in the area of Salurn/Salorno in the Adige Valley (*ibid.*, 420–421, see Fig. 8.4); and (4) the extension of the territories historically belonging to the Venetian Republic or politically, culturally and economically associated with its influence (*ibid.*, 428).⁵

To these four factors or criteria, Freshfield significantly added a fifth one, which exhibited an iconographic sensibility attached the British appreciation of

the Dolomite landscape, utterly familiar to readers of his time – an English gaze, whose symbolic energy acted as a foreign voice into the fiery debate on the political borders between Austria and Italy. However, to unravel this iconographic element and discuss its cultural relevance for the history of mountaineering, it is not Freshfield's argumentation that we have to analyse, but the colourful prose in which it is embedded.

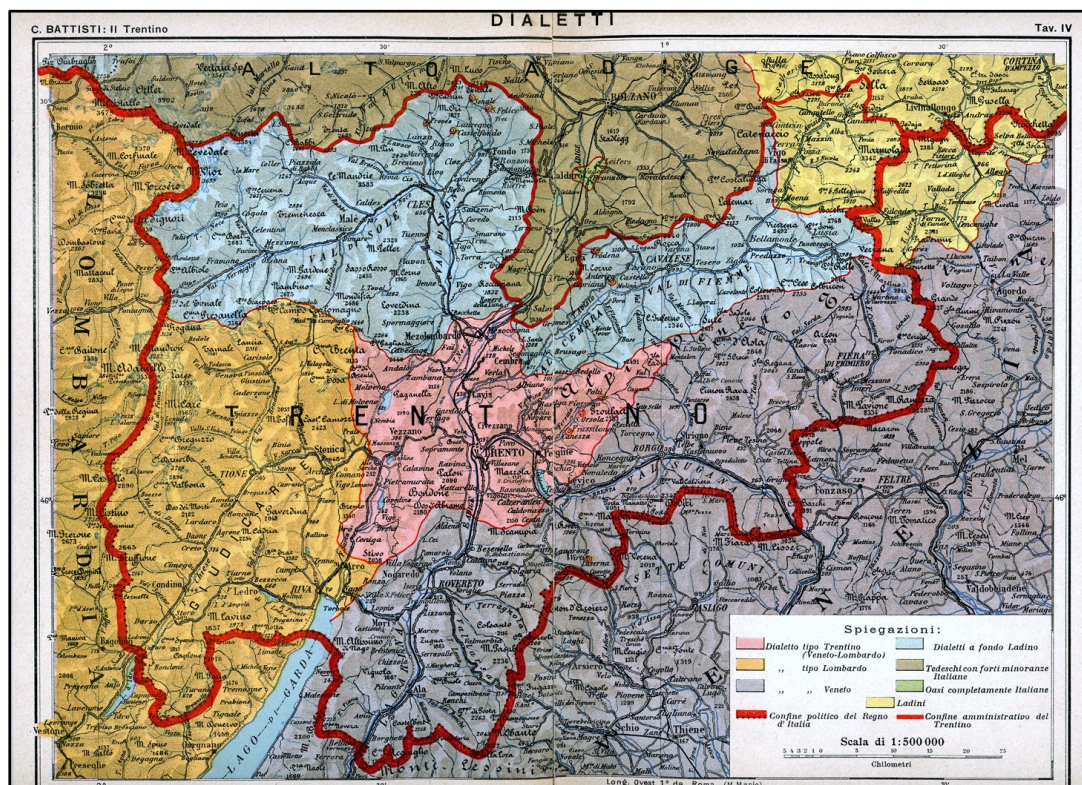


Fig. 8.4 - Cesare Battisti, *The varieties of local dialects in Trentino*, from Battisti, 1915, Tab. IV. Battisti's distribution distinguishes between dialects based on either Italian or Ladinian, on one hand, and German (with 'strong' Italian minorities), on the other. Surprisingly, the area comprising Leifers/Laives, Branzoll/Bronzolo, Kalter/Caldaro is presented as an 'oasis completely Italian'.

Ratzel had defined the 'Southern Alps' as the mountainous territory extending from the Bergamasque Alps 'through the Brescian, Vicentine and Venetian Alps, to the western slopes of the Julian Alps', carefully omitting to mention South Tyrol and the Trentino (Ratzel 1896, 79). Within those areas, instead, Freshfield considered also the Tridentine Alps, already proudly described in his aforementioned *Italian Alps* (1875), revealingly subtitled

Sketches in the Mountains of Ticino, Lombardy, the Trentino, and Venetia. The topographical equivalence of the two taxonomies allowed Freshfield to treat Ratzel's geographical definition of the 'Southern Alps' as 'Italian Alps', including, more explicitly, the district of Trentino, which Austria had incorporated within Tyrol and was then defending against the attacks of the Italian troops:

Yes; Italian they are [the Southern Alps], and their peculiar charm lies in the combination they display of Italian space and serenity with Alpine grandeur. There is a delightful element of surprise when the wide harmonious sweep of the landscape is interrupted by the strange shapes of the spires and obelisks that suddenly surge up above the lower hills. The eyes of the traveller, in place of being confined between two mountain walls, wander out into great distances, over wide expanses, and his imagination follows them to recall past rambles, or anticipate fresh adventure (Freshfield 1915, 415–416).⁶

That 'spires' and 'obelisks' had already become figurative tropes almost uniquely associated with the Dolomites is confirmed by British travel literature since the times of Murray (1837, 329, 334, but see also Ball 1868, 453; Gilbert and Churchill 1864, xv; Gilbert 1869, 114; Edwards 1873, 127); and Freshfield did not omit to reinforce it later in his lecture (Freshfield 1915, 416, 'the spires of the Dolomites ... granite walls and glacier curtains facing dolomitic towers and pinnacles of the strangest forms').

The aesthetic uniqueness of the scenery, coupled with the southern ambience of the 'open valleys rich in all the luxuriance of southern foliage and studded with prosperous villages', is offered as a sign of Italy and its amiable charm.⁷ Despite British national sympathies, which did play a role, Freshfield is vesting here with political weight an outlook on the Dolomite landscape popularized by English mountaineering literature; he employs a nostalgic

inflection of the picturesque, filled with personal reminiscences, to culturally reinforce his political penchant for Italy.⁸

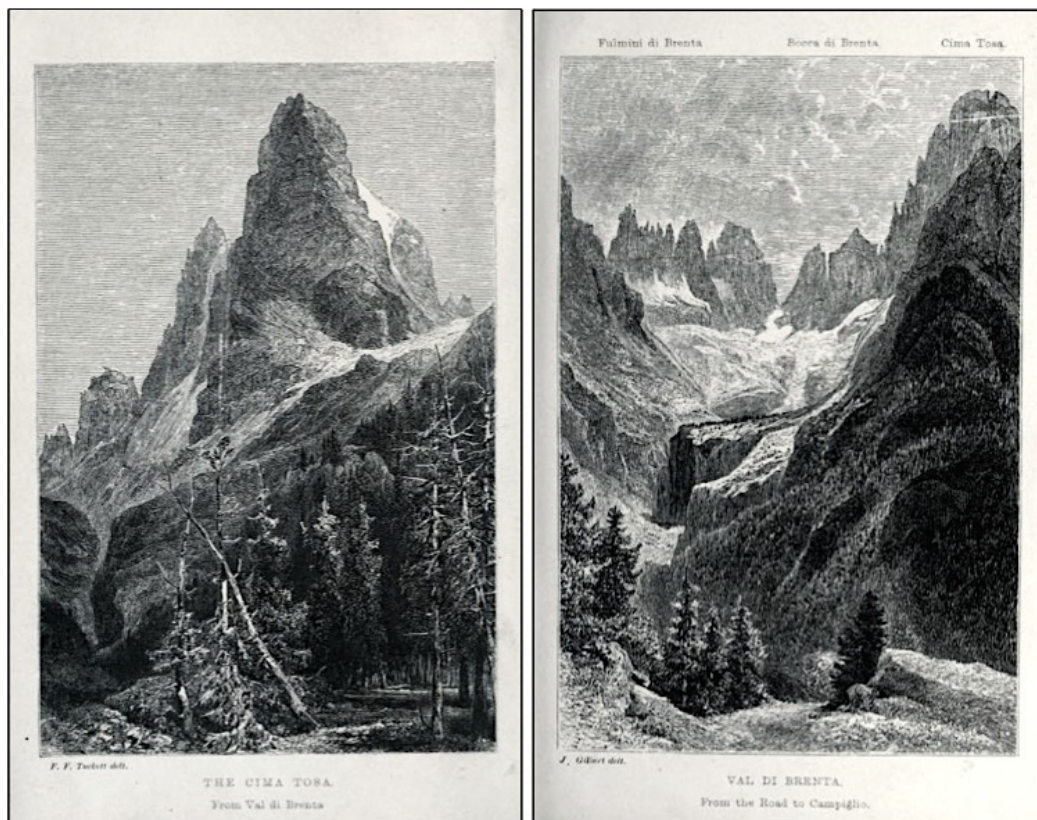


Fig. 8.5 - Left: Francis Fox Tuckett (del.), *The Cima Tosa, from Val di Brenta*; Right: Josiah Gilbert (del.), *Val di Brenta, from the road to Campiglio* (Freshfield 1875), frontispiece plate and 236.

During the late nineteenth century, the district of Trentino, situated ‘south of the Ortler group ... between the Stelvio Pass and Botzen on the north and Brescia and Verona on the south’, had constituted one of the privileged destinations for British mountaineers (Gasparetto 2012; Torchio 2009). Freshfield had already stressed its Italianness in his *Italian Alps* (1875) quite boldly. Few examples will suffice – in relation to the little frequented Brenta Valley, west of Trento (Fig. 8.5), he wrote ‘There, under an Italian sky and girt round by southern flowers and foliage, the fantastic rock-ridges and mighty towers of the Brenta stand opposite the broad snow-plains of the Adamello’ (1875, ix); in relation to the politically controversial Adige Valley, around

Trento, he added: 'here, even more than in Titian's country and the Val di Mel, all the breadth and romance of Italian landscape is united to Alpine grandeur and nobleness of form' (*ibid.*, 305); and, finally, in relation to San Martino di Castrozza, east of Trento, he noticed: 'The sweeping outline of dark forest form a foreground out of which its rigid flame-coloured ramparts rise like some phantom castle against the Italian blue' (*ibid.*, 285).⁹

British mountaineers were particularly attracted by the picturesqueness of the region ('from the picturesque point of view one of the most varied and fascinating districts in the Alps', *ibid.*, 416). The subtitle of Freshfield's *Italian Alps* (1875) reveals this British propensity through the word 'Sketches' (*Sketches in the Mountains of Ticino, Lombardy, the Trentino, and Venetia*), giving origin to a 'sketchbook' rather than a 'guidebook':

General experience proves that the British mind – the remark does not, I believe, hold equally good of the German – will not readily take in a new lesson through this medium. Few of our fellow-countrymen turn their steps towards an unknown region unless directed thither either by the report of friends or by some book less technical and abstruse than a Dictionary of Peaks and Passes (*ibid.*, viii).

The British mind, evoked here, is the one of a gentleman or a gentlewoman on an adventurous ramble in the Alps – as we have seen in Amelia Edwards' *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys* (see Chapter 4); the mind of a curious dilettante on the move, capturing the pleasures of an outlandish and fantastic southern landscape.

If it is true – to use Homi Bhabha's (1994, 218) influential formula – that the border region becomes equitable to a 'third space' (Massey 1992; Hollinshead 1998), or to a region in which 'the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences', and, therefore, 'a state of not-belonging or a hybrid amalgam of the qualities of the bordering lands'

(Epstein 1995, 298); Freshfield's case adds to the 'hybrid amalgam' of the Dolomite's debatable peaks a markedly British dimension; a dimension that the people dwelling in the bordering areas might not have immediately perceived or cultivated, but a dimension certainly cherished by people on the move (Cresswell 2006; Cresswell and Merriman 2011). To put it in Collins' terms (Collins 2004), Freshfield's sketches recirculate in the Austro-Italian debate a set of symbols common to a British context. It is neither the idea of *Heimat*, defended by the Austrians, nor the idea of the 'bastions of the nation', defended by the Italians (Cuaz 2005b, 167; Armiero 2011, 87), that motivates those sketches; but the idea of a shared sensibility (Wickberg 2007), which emerges from and received its symbolic consolidation in the loop of a movable and passing framework of cultural practices – the idea, we could say, of a sensibility in transition.¹⁰

The nostalgia for a cultivated gaze, for a refined but conversational vocabulary to express it, for a set of established interactions between permanent dwellers and temporary sojourners that sustained it is coupled here with the fear of losing the Arcadian fantasy of English mountaineering – 'now this Garden of Proserpine, the haunt of shepherds and peaceful herds, is being defaced by trenches and watered with blood. The pity of it!' (Freshfield 1915, 426). The image used to further develop and in some ways appropriate this sobering scene derives, perhaps not surprisingly, from the poetic works of one of the acknowledged pioneers of that sensibility – William Wordsworth's 'The Solitary Reaper' (2008, 151–152):

Here a few years, and flowers will cover the trenches and the graves and there will be only an echo in the valley homes to tell 'old unhappy far-off things, and battles long ago' [from Wordsworth, 'The Solitary Reaper', 1805, ll. 19-20']. Battles I fear with relatively small results (Freshfield 1915, 426).

Indeed, the great season of the British discovery of the Dolomites, or what we have termed here the 'Silver Age of Mountaineering' (see Chapter 4), was destined to end with the Great War – or perhaps sometimes earlier, with the development of the tourism business in South Tyrol, between the 1890s and the 1910s.

The Jewel of Austria's Crown

Despite his attempts to re-establish the lost links between Venice and its mountainous background, links that even the Italians had diluted in their propagandistic endeavour to promote the Dolomites as the 'bastions of Rome' ('The Vetta d'Italia the Italians call it', 'A nameless peak was called Cima Roma', Freshfield 1915, 420-421),¹¹ Freshfield could not avoid noticing that the developments of commercial tourism in the region had advanced under Austrian influence:

That Cortina has of late years been tied to Austria by such bonds as are created by a crowd of hotel-keepers and tourists is undeniable. But these bonds are surely of the pocket rather than of the soul (*ibid.*).

He omitted, however, to report that the tourist exploitation of Trentino had been in fact stimulated – if not initiated – by the assiduous presence of British travellers and mountaineers in the area (Hartungen 2006, 18–20). It was John Ball, for instance, who suggested the construction of the first Alpine hotel, the *Albergo Alpino*, in San Martino di Castrozza (1873), with the clear intent to develop tourism in the region, as a local response to the increased demand of British seasonal mountaineers (Rolando and Serafin 2005, 29; Gasparetto 2012, 117).

The *Albergo Alpino* ('Alpine Hotel') constituted the first hotel in a valley, such as the Primiero (Trentino), that had acquired a symbolic appeal for the picturesque beauty of the vast and impenetrable plateau of the Pale di San

Martino, a spectacular mountain range, spanning for some 50 km² between 2,500 and 2,800 metres. It was the theatre of a series of great British expeditions bearing the names of the most legendary mountaineers, such as John Henry Backhouse, George Fox, John Ball, Leslie Stephen, Francis Fox Tuckett, Charles Tucker, Henry Beachcroft, Arthur Guy Sanders Raynor, Ralph Milbanke-King, and Douglas William Freshfield (Gasparetto 2012, 36, 78, 145, 151, 228, 245). In the same years, in Madonna di Campiglio, at the heart of the isolated Brenta Dolomites, opened the *Stabilimento Alpino* (Hartungen 2006, 20), on whose development Freshfield himself had provided his readers with an attentive account (1875, 241–242).



Fig. 8.6 - *Bocca di Tuckett*, Brenta Dolomites, Photograph: Vittorio Stenico, Archivio SAT, Trento.

Also Leslie Stephen gave a startling description of his sojourn in the region in his 'The Peaks of Primiero', later included in *The Playground of Europe* (1871,

257–291). Francis Fox Tuckett, together with Freshfield, was an assiduous frequenter of the Trentino; his name remains linked with various Dolomite sites (Fig. 8.6 and Fig. 8.10). John Ball became a pioneering explorer of the area, from 1867 onwards, preceded only by Josiah Gilbert and George Cheetham Churchill in 1862. It was Ball, however, who convinced Leopoldo Ben (1834-1893), from Primiero, to build in San Martino the *Albergo Alpino* (Hartungen 2006, 23).



Fig. 8.7 - *Stalimento Alpino*, Madonna di Campiglio, Archivio SAT, Trento.

Current research on the early development, management and distribution of the hotel business in the Dolomites is still scattered and unsystematic – certainly not equivalent to the level of studies available on the situation in the Western Alps and Switzerland (Flückiger-Seiler 2001; Denby 1998, 111–136; Ott 1990). But one can safely say that these earliest hotels, equally to be found in the German-speaking South Tyrol, were not comparable with the standards of the Swiss *Hôtellerie* (Forcher 1989). Suffice it here to quote Freshfield himself in relation to Giovan Battista Righi's *Stalimento Alpino* in Madonna di Campiglio (Fig. 8.7), later transformed by the Austrians into the Jugendstil-fashioned *Grand Hotel des Alpes*, becoming one of the privileged destinations for wealthy tourists and prominent intellectuals from *Mitteleuropa* (Grazioli 2006; Hartungen 2006): 'The service "bon et exact" was represented by three Italian

youths, pale, untidy and swift-footed, who fled with the greatest alacrity from any guest whose face gave tokens of an approaching want' (Freshfield 1875, 242). Certainly these hotels – if not comparable with the dirty inns described by Amelia B. Edwards (Edwards 1873, 336–337) – added more to the picturesqueness of the scenery rather than to the comfort of the holiday.

At the onset of the Great War, however, the commercial exploitation of the Dolomite region had certainly advanced and indeed become an Austrian affair (Barker 1982; Wobmann 1982). The hotels that tourists could find along the great 'Dolomite Road' ('Dolomitenstrasse'), conceived and realised by Theodor Christomannos (1854-1911) to link Bolzano/Bozen to Cortina d'Ampezzo, through some of the most spectacular Dolomite passes (Costalunga/Karerpass, Pordoi, Falzarego), bore unambiguously Austrian names – Finatzer, Post, Stern, Traube, Alpenrose, Rosengartenhof, etc. (Wolff 1908; Christomannos 1909; Faggioni 2012).¹² Following the Swiss model, Christomannos – the most glittering figure in the history of tourism in Tyrol – founded, in collaboration with the Viennese architect Otto Schmid, the Tyrolean Alpine Hotel Association ('Verein für Alpenhotels in Tirol', 1896) to develop the high valleys of the area for the travelling public, by building and running new comfortable hotels (Grand Hotel Suldén, 1892-93; Grand Hotel Trafoi, 1895; Grand Hotel Karersee, 1896, see Fig. 8.8) and linking the existing ones in a well-organised network of luxurious tourist resorts (Faggioni 2012, 132–166; Patzeit 2010; Hartungen 2006, 25–27; Kramer 1972).

Christomannos' hotels, all built by Schmid, inserted an 'urban interzone' in the mountainous landscape of Tyrol (Knoch 2008; Pitscheider 2005; Trentin-Meyer 2000), allowing it to become part of an updated version of the Grand Tour – the 'Grand Hotel Tour' – in which the cosmopolitan ethos of past travel practices could re-circulate in the loop of new forms of social mobility, entertainment, interaction and consumption (Knoch 2008, 137). One way to

further qualify these temporary and transitory urban zones is to see them as 'seasonal urban islands' within isolated 'upland communities' (Viazzo 1989); islands in which chunks of modernity suddenly appeared, allowed for by mobility infrastructures utterly new to the local population – railroads, cableways and modern roads built for cars (Armiero 2011, 43–52).



Fig. 8.8 - *Grand Hotel Kareersee*, postcard, 1900, The Library of Congress, Washington DC.

All this, of course, deeply affected the landscape, but also the soundscape of the area (*ibid.*, 48: 'The road had covered the sounds of nature with the noise of the city with its cars and crowds'); and it affected also – to apply Arjun Appadurai's famous neologisms (Appadurai 1996, 33) – the 'technoscape', 'financescape', 'mediascape', and 'ideoscape' of a region undergoing a series of unexpected transformations with lasting consequences. One of these was the popularity of these Grand Hotels among intellectuals, poets and novelists, who

started using them as a setting for their fictional plots (Künzli 2007; Matthias 2006; Seger 2007; 2005; Becker 2000).



Fig. 8.9 - The Garden City of Meran, Gilf Promenade, postcard 1900, The Library of Congress, Washington DC.

Through Christomannos' initiatives, South Tyrol became a fashionable destination in its own right, self-consciously similar to the most popular resorts in the Swiss Alps: 'Each year sees an increasing number of winter-sportsmen from England in Tyrol, and it may one day become as popular as Switzerland' (Stoddard 1912, 291). The spectacular *Dolomitenstrasse* ('Dolomite Road'), linking Bolzano/Bozen to Cortina d'Ampezzo (the 'Pearl of the Dolomites'), offered a modern and more comfortable alternative to the old way starting from Venice, to soon become a paradigm of Alpine roads.¹³ The Garden City of Meran (Fig. 8.9) – the ancient capital of Tyrol, best known for its luxurious spas (Steward 2002), its cosmopolitan flavour, its mild climate, its surrounding hills covered with vineyards and its surrounding mountains raising above 3,000

metres – became a modern substitute for Venice, rivalling even with Cortina, as the new fashionable gate to the Dolomites.

In 1912, Frederick Wolcott Stoddard (1871-1945) described Meran as an increasingly popular destination for Edwardian travellers:

Meran abounds in well-kept walks and gardens, and the Gifl promenade along the ravine of the river Passer, with its wealth of flowers and native and exotic plants and trees, is a gem of natural and artificial beauty. Seen when the river comes down in spate after heavy rains – seething and boiling as it forces its turgid course through the narrow precipitous gorge – one forgives the elements, which are rarely so unkind. The old town is very interesting, with its arcaded Lauben, arched doorways, and quaint architecture, and on holidays Meran is gay with the brightly coloured costumes of the peasantry. In the way of sport and amusement there is a large Sportplatz, with riding school, skating rink, tennis courts, hockey and football grounds, and racecourse. In spring and autumn, meetings extending over several days, with flat racing, steeple chasing, and trotting matches, take place, and peasants' races on horseback, which are very amusing, and wrestling matches are held. Nightly performances are given in the theatre, an orchestra thirty strong plays every day on the public promenades or in the gardens, and there are frequent classical concerts in the Kurhaus, besides many other entertainments in the town. During Carnival time the ordinary and masked balls, the Orso, the battle of flowers, the confetti fights, and beauty competitions, if on a smaller scale than in some places, are worth seeing, and serve to keep the visitor amused (Stoddard 1912, 209).

Regardless of the fact that the English 'invention' of the Dolomite Mountains was originally attached to Venice and its cultural and natural prerogatives (Gilbert and Churchill 1864), the distinction between the Dolomites and Tyrol blurred progressively into a topographical synonym (Davidson 1912, 10). The

Tyrolean label attracted the curiosity of a different crowd of tourists – less interested in the adventurous encounter with spectacular mountain sceneries, described by Freshfield, than in the cosmopolitan experience of a highly fashionable Alpine holiday (Trentin-Meyer 2000; Knoch 2008). The shift from Venice to Tyrol is graphically manifested in the gradual change of toponyms, acknowledged also by British travel books, to identify the Dolomites – from Ball's 'Venetian Alps' to Freshfield's 'Venetian Tyrol' and Davidson's the 'Jewel of Austria's Crown'.

The Austrian development of a proper tourist industry in Tyrol reduced the distinctiveness of the region by inserting in the Dolomite landscape new modes of mobility (Cresswell 2006, 5) – utterly different from the ones portrayed by Freshfield in describing British mountaineering. The improved transportation and the enhanced quality of the hotel business paved the way for a transformation of the Dolomite Mountains into commodities, or – as Tim Cresswell points out in more general terms – into 'goods' which 'began to lose their spatial presence and became instead products of an increasingly expansive market' (*ibid.*, 6). In conceptualising the 'distinctiveness of place', Cresswell recycles here Walter Benjamin's 'aura' of authenticity supposed to be lost in the modern processes of mechanical reproduction (1986, 223). From the point of view of British travellers and mountaineers – summarized quite lucidly in Freshfield's dismissive qualification of the new bonds between 'tourists' and 'hotel-keepers' as 'bonds of the pocket rather than of the soul' (1915, 421) – the aura or 'soul' deemed here to be lost is an aura of 'untroddenness' and 'unfrequentedness', to recall Amelia B. Edwards' famous formula (1873), an aura, in short, of 'rarity' and 'exclusivity' loosely attached to an utterly British inflection of 'adventurous sublimity' (Hansen 1991, 140; 1995, 315).

All this seems to fulfil, also for the Dolomite Mountains, what Ruskin had predicted for Switzerland in 1851, in an acid page of 'Mountain Glory', recently discussed by Anthony Ozturuk (2012, 92):

The valley of Chamouni, another spot also unique in its way, is rapidly being turned into a kind of Cremorne Gardens; and I can foresee, within the perspective of but few years, the town of Lucerne consisting of a row of symmetrical hotels round the foot of the lake, its old bridges destroyed, an iron one built over the Reuss, and an acacia promenade carried along the lake-shore, with a German band playing under a Chinese temple at the end of it, and the enlightened travellers, representatives of European civilization, performing before the Alps, in each afternoon summer sunlight, in their modern manner, the Dance of Death.

Ruskin's moral account predicts here the 'decline of the Alpine sublime into macabre cosmopolitan chaos' – 'The once-acute disparity between the "divine permanence" of mountains and the picturesque mouldering of human construction is blurred, response to natural landscape blunted, the redemptive motif of geo-poetics violated' (*ibid.*; see also Ozturk 2010). The cosmopolitan intrusion into the mountain scenery impressed an 'acceleration' to the Alpine sublime, reducing it to a commodity to consume (Bell and Lyall 2002).

It is however disputable to attribute this decline solely to the 'impious mentality of the Alpine Club' (Ozturk 2012, 92), allegedly responsible for substituting 'conquest' for the 'sublime'; it would be perhaps more correct to understand this decline as a product of the 'Golden Age', rather than of the 'Silver Age of Mountaineering' – the Dolomite mountains, in this period, were precisely sought for as an alternative to the conquering ethos of the 'Golden Age', and as an alternative to the 'atheistical, brutal and profane' touristic exploitation of the Western and Central Alps (see Chapter 4). And if it is true that a proper lover of the Dolomites, for instance, Ralph Milbanke Gordon Noel

King, second Earl of Lovelace (1839–1906, see Lloyd-Jones 2004), was never a member of the Alpine Club (Torchio 2009), it is also true that the British institution never endorsed the systematic exploitation of the touristic potential of those mountains exemplified, instead, by the German-Austrian *Alpenverein* (Holt 2008, 20–26).

If not entirely Ruskinian, Freshfield's contempt for the 'bonds of the pocket' reveals a nostalgia for the 'bonds of the soul' deemed to be lost (1915, 420-421) – a nostalgia that back in 1901, Luigi Vittorio Bertarelli, the founder of the Italian Touring Club (TCI), had transformed into a quest:

We must make our youth understand our country's soul. Because, you know this, the country does have a soul. It may be transient, fluid, hidden, surely omnipresent. Tourist science is to discover this soul ... This soul wafts on the uncultivated fields, in the mountains, on the fertile plains ... Give me the support of feelings, give me the soul and through it Italy itself will make the Italians (quoted in Armiero 2011, 44).

Making the Italians through tourism, however, implied an appreciation of a highly diversified natural landscape that prevented the appropriation of the Swiss model amidst the mountains of Trentino (Nervi 2002). And if, on one hand, the Italian militarisation of the Dolomites during World War I partly recycled elements of the intrepidity, masculinity and character-building typical of the 'Golden Age' (Hansen 1991; 1995; 2013); on the other, their Italian touristification partly rescued an ideal of the divine in landscape of Ruskinian memory – 'the CAI [i.e. Club Alpino Italiano, 'Italian Alpine Club'] and the Touring Club were the churches in which the landscape of nation was worshipped' (Armiero 2011, 44).

In the second part of the nineteenth century, the increased engagement on the part of the Catholic establishment to develop in the Italian Alps a pedagogical alternative to the luxurious and sportive exploitation of mountain

scenery by the tourism business was permeated by the recourse to some of the principles sponsored by the British Alpine Club (Cuaz 2005a, 291, and 2006, 359). As Cuaz points out, quoting the Abbé Gorret, one of the main theoreticians and interpreters of Catholic Alpinism in the nineteenth century, 'going to the mountains meant "saving the young from the pleasures of the city and transmitting them the powerful emotions of nature ... The remedy for evil is located in the mountains"' (Cuaz 2006, 360).

The character-building ethos that marked the 'Golden Age of Mountaineering' becomes during the 'Silver Age' a Catholic virtue – a 'very effective means, good for discipline, morality and health' (*ibid.*, 359). The parallel that Cuaz establishes between the sportive conquest of Alpine peaks and the erection of crosses and statues of Christ and the Virgin Mary on mountain summits reveals the presence of a recirculation of symbols that had found its most original expression in Victorian mountaineering (Hansen 1995; 2013; Colley 2010; Tebbutt 2006; Braham 2004) – 'all the most important summits in Italy became lands to conquer and to mark with holy symbols. Altars were set up in the name of the Lord, as a symbol of a renewed alliance' (Cuaz 2006, 361, see also 2005b, 293).

In sharp contrast with Christomannos' cosmopolitan network of Grand Hotels, also the series of small mountain huts ('rifugi alpini' or 'Berghütten') built in the Trentino by the *Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini* (SAT, 'Tridentine Alpine Society', founded in 1872) in competition with the German-Austrian *Alpenverein* (Decarli 2006a; Benassi 2002), conveyed a similar feeling of simplicity, morality and spiritual rejuvenation. But differently from Catholic Alpinism, which remained utterly alien to the political exploitation of Alpine landscape (Cuaz 2005a, 293), the character-building tone of their initiatives subtended a nationalist propaganda. The two adjacent Alpine huts in the Brenta Dolomites, *Rifugio Quintino Sella* and *Rifugio Francis Fox Tuckett* (Fig. 8.10) – the

first one built by the SAT under the Austrian regime, in honour of the Italian Finance Minister and founder of the Italian Alpine Club, the second built not much later by the Berlin section of the *Alpenverein* – represent an eloquent case for the multifaceted dimension of the debatable nature of Dolomite peaks.



Fig. 8.10 - *Rifugio Tuckett* (left) and *Rifugio Sella* (right), Brenta Dolomites, Archivio SAT, Trento.

But they equally show us that ‘mountains became a battlefield not only among the national Alpine clubs, committed to the “war of the flags”, but also among the sporting associations, lay and religious, liberal and socialist, which were competing to reach the summit with their symbols to establish a scale of courage’ (Cuaz 2006, 361; Pastore 2003). And it is interesting to notice that while the SAT named its *rifugio* after one of the most prominent figures of Italian politics of the time and founder of the Italian Alpine Club, the *Alpenverein* did not find appropriate to entitle its *Hütte* after a German or Austrian mountaineer, but chose instead an Englishman, Francis Fox Tuckett (1834-1913), who elected the Trentino as one of his privileged Alpine destinations; despite the fact that in recognition of his role in charting, mapping and exploring the Alps in general, and much of Trentino in particular, he had received an honorary degree from the King of Italy, Victor Emanuel.

The quest for the 'soul' of the Dolomite landscape emerged as urgent in the very moment in which mountains became the focus of attention of competing discourses, in which the idea of their symbolic dimension was negotiated at different levels and through different, sometimes even violent, interactions. The claim to the Englishness of a certain set of cultural practices or better styles of travelling about in the region was defended not only by members of the Alpine Club in competition with the *Alpenverein* but also by Italians, looking for viable models to appropriate themselves of what they soon began to acknowledge as part of their identity. This appropriation generated a series of second circulations of symbols of which perhaps only British mountaineers and their readers were still able to recognise the historical and intellectual traces. When the British control, if not monopoly, over these symbols started to lose its effectiveness, other narratives, based on other symbols, started re-circulating; and the debate over the 'authenticity' of the aesthetic feeling, spurred by the Dolomite peaks, opened the way to the folkloric exploration of its mythical valleys.

Magic Mountains

Leslie Stephen, the acclaimed author of *The Playground of Europe* (1871), discovered the Dolomites late. Fascinated by the fantastic peaks of Primiero ('the fantastic Dolomite mountains towered all around me in shapes more like dreams than sober realities'), he qualified the Dolomites as the ultimate 'fairylane of the Alps' (Stephen 1871, 267, 260; see also Edwards 1864, 3); Mr Cook's *Tourist Handbook for Northern Italy* (1875) called them 'wondrous region' and counted them 'among the wonders of the world' (*ibid.*, 17); Frances Elliot called them 'wonder-land' (Elliot 1870, 356). Such fanciful portrayals became somewhat commonplace in mountaineering and travel literature to describe the 'Pale Mountains' (Wolff 1927; Federa 2009), playing along with the

resurgence of the mythic and legendary, in the wake of the cult of Prince Albert and the increasing Victorian attraction for German culture (Vaughan 1979; Birke and Kluxen 1983; Darby and Smith 1983; for the emergence of an ethnographic imagination in the nineteenth century, see Herbert 1991). Exploiting this fashion, Stephen reminds his readers of the familiarity they were already supposed to have with the mountains surrounding Bozen/Bolzano, the Rosengarten – or, more fantastically put, the ‘Rose garden of the goblin King Laurin’ (Stephen 1871, 260; Fig. 8.11).

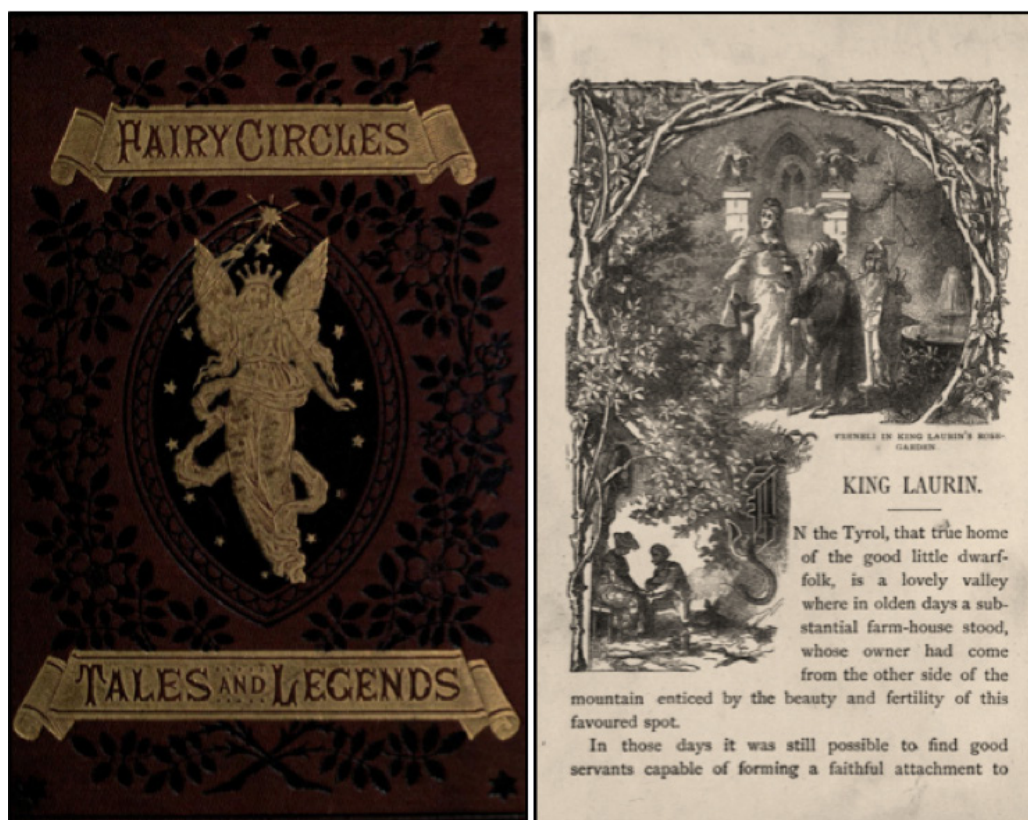


Fig. 8.11 - Timme, Marie (Villamaria, pseud.), *Fairy Circles: Tales and Legends of Giants, Dwarfs, Fairies, Water-Sprites and Hobgoblins*, London 1877 (cover, right; p. 32, left).

Like many legends, the tale of King Laurin (Sawyer and Molles 1963) is quite complex, and often accounted for differently (see Gilbert and Churchill 1864, 64: ‘An old writer relates that the peasant of the Etsch were able to tell many stories of their King Laurin’);¹⁴ but in its various versions it constitutes the ‘chief popular epic’ of Tyrol, passing also into the folklore of other parts of Germany

(Busk 1871, 11). To understand the profuse references to it found in mountaineering literature, it is essential to briefly illustrate its plot. It is the archetypal story of an unrequited love, involving a dwarf-king, magical nymphs, beautiful princesses, valiant knights, and, most importantly, a magnificent rose garden situated on a mountain. Fallen in love with an unattainable princess, the dwarf-king holds her captive in his magical garden; three knights manage to rescue her with the complicity of the garden itself; the king casts a spell on it, making it invisible by day and night, forgetting however to include the twilight in his curse; so, at every sunrise and sunset the garden becomes visible, tainting the mountain with the colours of its roses (Zingerle 1850; Wolff 1927, 25–27; Kindl 1997 and 1998; Federa 2009). See, for instance, the description of the effect by Davidson:

But the crowning of Bozen comes at the closing of the day. Towards eventide, after the sun has touched the Vajolet's glittering spires with a golden glory; then it is that colour, more wildly rampant than anything yet produced by cultivation, or wrought by the hand of man, sweeps over the East, crimsoning the splintered pinnacles of the Rosengarten into living fire, dyeing King Laurin's garden shades not easily reproduced by mortal man. The on-looker spellbound at this wonderful *Alpenglühe* irradiating earth and sky, hears all around exclamations of delight in many tongues (Davidson 1912, 210).

And, again, in Hamer:

The Rosengarten from Botzen is the most characteristic of the Dolomite scenery, with the strange, rocky walls, splashed with vivid colour, and the pinnacles and towers twisted into fantastic shapes, guarding the magic garden of the goblin King Laurin (Hamer 1910, 66–67).

Stephen is one of the earliest alpinists to establish a strong link between the legend of Laurin and the Dolomite landscape as a whole, most probably

influenced by the highly informative article by Sir Courtenay Peregrine Ilbert (1841-1924, see Cocks 2004), published in Stephen's *The Cornhill Magazine* (Ilbert 1870).¹⁵ By inserting the king as protagonist into its history and his account of the region, he conforms, perhaps unwillingly, to both the Germanic imagery of the Dolomites and the popular interest in folklore seen at home. The story of Laurin further adds to the mountains 'a double measure of enchantment' (*ibid.*), allowing the rock face to be poetically transformed into the potential 'background for the garden of Kubla Khan' (*ibid.*, 268) – the mystical king-figure in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's hallucinogenic poem (Bloom, 1971); and, in describing the fantastic pinnacles of Primiero, Stephen looked out 'instinctively for the strange valley where Sinbad collected his heaps of diamonds' (Stephen 1871, 268). In this way, Laurin becomes something of a timeless narrative, which somehow transcended cultural divides. Likewise, Freshfield considers Laurin as a device through which the 'poetry' of the mountains can be combined with their physical 'majesty', and as such helps the landscape become subject matter for 'representation' and a 'valuable material for art' – 'One mountain sketch of Turner is enough to prove this' (Fig. 8.12; Freshfield, 1875, 335-336).

The 'strange forms' of the Rosengarten (Catinaccio)/Schlern (Sciliar/ Sciliër) group are increasingly understood by Stephen through the 'spells of King Laurin, or the mysterious monarch, whatever may be his name, who rules these enchanted districts' where whose story is 'almost tangible' (Stephen, 1871, 271). For Stoddard, 'King Laurin was the most powerful dwarf the world has ever seen. He ruled over thousands of pigmies, and he lived so long ago that no one knows when it was. His home was in the centre of the Schlern mountain in the Dolomites, but he held his court in the Nonsberg in the Val di Non [in Trentino], and the village of Laurein in that valley is named after him' (Stoddard 1912, 227). The power of Laurin was such that it ended in encompassing the

entire Dolomite region, crossing invisible borders between the German-speaking and the Italian-speaking Tyrol. Stoddard supports this idea also topographically; his account of Laurin suggests that the 'subterranean passages in his mountain home' allowed him to travel as far as Wessobrunn in Bavaria (Stoddard, 1912, 226) – a suggestion possibly nurtured by Christomannos himself, who sold the Dolomites as 'the gate into the kingdom of immortal ghosts, of high-flying giants' (Beattie 2006, 109).



Fig. 8.12 - J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), *Bozen and the Dolomites (with the Rosengarten)*, 1840, watercolour, 197x285cm, Tate Gallery, London.

It is less important, however, to unravel the origin of the Laurin legend and the recourse to a Germanic framework to present the Dolomites as 'the fairyland of the Alps' in English mountaineering literature – origin that for that context probably derives from Gilbert's and Churchill's consultation of German sources, such as Ernst Adolf Schaubach's (1800-1850) *Die deutschen Alpen* (1846), to collect available information for their Dolomite bestseller (Gilbert and Churchill 1864);¹⁶ it is far more interesting to look at the effects of its

recirculation within the broader market of travel literature. The popularity of the King Laurin myth, which had already found its way into children's literature (Timme 1876; 1877, Fig. 8.11), spurred folklorists to exploit its success by establishing a new genre of travel literature – the 'folkloric guide'.

Exploiting and expanding on the ethnographic account already announced in Amelia Edwards' *Untrodden Peaks and Unfrequented Valleys* (1873), the folkloric guide harnessed the mythological, legendary and religious heritage of the Tyrolean lowlands to stress their gloomier 'unfrequentedness' against the more glorious 'untroddedness' of their highlands. This genre proved to be less successful than the one pioneered by Edwards; but conveyed in England the image of an isolated community of timeless, otherworldly people that would later influence the genre of fictional fantasy. The liberating potential of the sublime experience that the Dolomite peaks could offer to British travellers and mountaineers moves here into the fairy-tale realm of what Jack Zipes called 'the liberating potential of the fantastic' (Zipes 2006, 169–191). For 'romantic anticapitalist writers of fairy tales like C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien', this outlandish realm will allow them to 'look back conservatively to the past for salvation' (*ibid.*, 185), transforming the real experience of picturesque gazing performed in a direct contact with the actual mountain landscape into a fantastic vision of picturesque dreaming constructed in a mediated encounter with an imagined mountain scenery born out of childhood memories.

Although still hazy in its evidence, but consistently mentioned in current travel guides,¹⁷ it has been advanced that the bizarre forms of the Dolomite valleys inspired the creation of John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's (1892-1973) 'Middle Earth'; however, the inspiration seems to rest on a set of 'family resemblances' between the imagined landscape of Middle Earth and the 'romantic' configuration of the Dolomite Mountains rather than based on his alleged consultation of specific folkloric sources.¹⁸ It is perhaps enough to recall

here that Tolkien possessed a postcard with a reproduction of Joseph Madlener's (1881–1967) *Der Berggeist* ('the spirit or the ghost of the mountain'), portraying a wizard-like man, seated alone in a forest but surrounded by a friendly and beneficial wild-life, with the Dolomites (most probably the Cinque Torri) featured in the background; on the back of the postcard Tolkien wrote 'The origin of Gandalf' (Fig. 8.13; Carpenter 2000, 59; Kiermeier-Debre and Vogel 2007; Zimmerman 1983).



Fig. 8.13 - Joseph Madlener (1881-1967), *The Berggeist*, 1920s, ink, watercolour and gouache, 675x508cm, private collection, sold at Sotheby's in 2005 (left); Joseph Madlener, *The Berggeist*, 1935, postcard, in the art-postcard series *Sagen und Märchen*, Munich: Kunstverlag F. A. Ackermann, 1935 (right).

The Dolomite background of Titian's paintings, so much cherished by Josiah Gilbert is gone. Madlener's foreground replaces here Venetian civilised classicism with German cultural nature – columns become trees, buildings become boulders, cherubs become squirrels and architectural adornments become wild flowers, wrapped in the solitude of a gaze that is not cast from an Italian city anymore but from a German forest. The Dolomites are surrounded

by an evocative mysterious iconography that is not immediately recognizable through classical or biblical erudition, but perceived instead as a fantastic stage without prescriptive narrative open to fabulous and primeval reformulations – as if the written script of the Grand Tour would be replaced by the oral tales of a Germanic *Wanderer*. The 'romantic' aura of mystery (in the sense explained in Chapter 1), with which Mr Cook had promoted the Dolomites as the perfect scenario to stage a Gothic romance, is here imaginatively realised, whereby the ingredients of the scene, exemplified by the list of 'Ruined castles, mouldering towers, weird, witch-like ravines and gorges' (Cook 1875, 17) are now provided by the legends and myths of Tyrol.

It is in this context that we might better appreciate the writings of the English traveller and folklorist, Harriette Rachel Busk (1831-1907, see Lee 2004), who described Tyrol as a country still unexplored, and therefore deemed worthy of British 'esteem and admiration' (Busk 1871, 2):

There are none who know Tirol but are forward to express regret that so picturesque and so primitive a country should be as yet, comparatively with other tracks of travel, so little opened up to the dilettante explorer (Busk 1874, v).¹⁹

In speaking of Tyrol as comparatively little known to British readers, Busk recycled a topos already used in 'the publications of pioneers who [had] gone before' her (*ibid.*, x). The names she mentions are already known to us – Murray, Ball, Gilbert and Churchill, and Amelia Edwards ('Edwards has shown what even ladies may do among its Untrodden Peaks', *ibid.*, xi), whose successful travel books had appeared on the market not so long before. But while these authors – with perhaps the only exception of Edwards – paid attention primarily to the mountains scattered in the district, Busk intended to attract her readers (and potential travellers) by telling the stories that 'lie hidden among its Valleys,

Trodden and Untrodden', faithful to her belief that it was 'down in its Valleys ... that its traditions dwell' (*ibid.*).

This shift from 'mountains' to 'valleys' might be the reason why her name is hardly to be found in recent and less recent histories of mountaineering; and yet it is in her book that the Marmolada is tagged for the first time as 'the Queen of the Dolomites', name with which the highest peak of this mountain range (3343m) is now popularly known (*ibid.*, 379).²⁰ Busk's view of Tyrol is haunted by 'the charm of mystery' (*ibid.*, x) emanating from its valleys, which she colours as a magic garden of 'thistles and roses' that 'old world fancy has planted – and planted nowhere more prolifically than in Tirol' (*ibid.*, x). The 'thistles and roses' of Busk's Tyrolean garden are offered to the 'civilized tourist' and 'dilettante explorer' (*ibid.*, v) as the treasure of myths and legends of an oral culture lost in the margins of history.

Buttressing her argument on a quotation from the historian George Bernard Depping (1784-1853), Busk presents Tyrol as a country isolated from the civilized world, and the Tyrolean people as 'Primitive and unsophisticated tillers of the soil' (*ibid.*, 11):

Peoples who are cut off from the rest of the world by such boundaries as seas, mountains, or wastes, by reason of the difficulty of communication thus occasioned, are driven to concentrate their attention to local events; and in their many idle hours they work up their myths and tales into poems, which stand them in stead of books, and, in fact, constitute a literature (Depping, quoted in *ibid.*, 10-11).

Tyrol, according to Busk, epitomized this condition: 'Europe possesses in Tirol one little country at least in whose mountain fastness a store of these treasures not only lies enshrined, but where we may yet see it in request' (*ibid.*). To put it in Foucault's words, Tyrol is presented to British travellers as a legendary 'heterotopia' of Europe.

Another reason for the relatively little attention paid to her book – in comparison, for instance, to Edwards' one – was the aura of scepticism and the stigma of triviality attached in Britain to her folkloric repertoire.²¹ The anxiety over being deemed trivial was one of the problems shared also by the same inventor of the term 'folklore', the antiquarian William John Thoms (1803–1885, see Sherbo 2004), as we can find explicitly revealed on the pages of *The Athenaeum* and in those of *Notes and Queries* (Roper 2007, 207, 212; see also 2012). Writing under the pseudonym of Ambrose Merton, Thoms addressed *The Athenaeum* in 1846 with the explicit request to include in the magazine a periodical column entirely devoted to the 'Folk-lore' of England, proposing an ethnographical inquiry similar to the one launched in Germany by the Brothers Grimm (Thoms 1846a, and 1846b).

In a 'Post Scriptum', Thoms also announced his intention, never fulfilled, of writing a monograph upon that subject (1846a, 863), despite the perplexities of the popular view towards that 'branch of our Popular Mythology', which exhibited 'a striking intermixture of Celtic and Teutonic elements', once exploited by Shakespeare. These elements, Thoms maintained, were still alive in England, especially in those districts 'where steam-engines, cotton mills, mail coaches, and similar exorcists have not penetrated', and where the believes in 'fairies' and 'elves', inhabiting 'hills, brooks, standing lakes, or groves', were just waiting to be explored (1846b, 886). The reasons for Thoms' anxiety was then duplicitous – he felt, on one hand, that 'Popular Mythology' was considered bluntly trivial by the classically educated elite and straightforwardly obsolete in an increasingly technical and industrial society.

To overcome this anxiety, Busk referred herself to Germany. She quoted in her book over four pages of Karl Blind's (1826–1907, see Fryer and Lee 2004) 'Germanic Mythology', which appeared just one year before in *The Contemporary Review* (Blind 1873). The gist of Blind's argument was that to his

day England was imbued with Germanic mythology ('so full in England, to this day, of the vestiges of Germanic mythology', *ibid.*, 623), being filled with a 'fantastic theory of minor deities, of fairies and wood-women, and elfin and pixies and cobolds, that have been evolved out of all the forces of Nature by the Teutonic mind' (*ibid.*, 625-627). In making Blind's argument her own, Busk elected Tyrol as a country populated by lurid and gesticulating goblins:

Such are the Beings whom we meet wandering all over Tirol; transformed often into new personalities, invested with new attributes and supplemented with many a mysterious companion, the offspring of an imagination informed by another order of thought, but all of them more living, and more readily to be met with, than in any part of wonder-loving Germany itself (Busk 1874, 7).

Despite their mythological value, this repertoire of legendary characters demonstrates, for Busk, 'how large is the debt we owe to legends and traditions in building up our very civilization' (*ibid.*, 7). This 'sportive fancy has not only charmed the dilettante' but also the 'deep and able thinker', such as the German philologist Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900, see Fynes 2004), who insisted that 'by this time the study of popular tales has become a recognized branch of the studies of mankind' (Busk 1874, 2) – a new branch that, in Busk's eyes, had to replace the requirement of a proper classical erudition once believed needed to embed an Alpine holiday in an experience memorable of the Grand Tour ('Surrounded from their earliest years with living pictures of Nature's choicest forms and colouring, [the Tyrolean people] need no popular fiction to cultivate their imagination, no schools of design to educate their taste', *ibid.*, 2).²² The fact is, as we have seen, that British travellers choosing the Dolomites for their holidays hoped to find there the right ingredients and the right environment to exercise precisely those two faculties – refined taste and vivid imagination.

To embark on such a fantastic journey, Busk's civilized reader had to consult her previous book, *Household Stories from the Land of Hofer, or Popular Myths of Tirol* (1871), with the translations and elucidations in English of Tyrolean mythological literature, not infrequently referenced in *The Valleys of Tirol* (1874); interestingly, the subtitle pays a special homage to the increasingly popular Laurin's legend – 'Including the Rosen-Garden of King Laurin'. With these tools, British travellers would have found the Tyroleans as the devout inhabitants of a country still surrounded by an exemplary aura of heroism:

Hardy, patient, and persevering; patriotic and loyal to a fault; honest and hospitable to a proverb – they carry the observance of their religion into the minutest practice of everyday life; and there underlies all these more solid qualities a tender, poetical, romantic spirit which throws a soft halo round their ceaseless toil, and invests their heroic struggles for independence with a bright glow of chivalry ... Shout out from the world's ambitions by their pathless Alps, they have learned to see before them two aims alone – to maintain the integrity and the sanctity of their humble homes on earth, and to obtain one day a place in that better Home above, to which the uplifted fingers of their sun-bathed mountain-peaks ever gloriously point (Busk 1871, 2).

This pious portrayal was already pervasive in the descriptions of Tyrol – including the so-called 'Wälsch-Tirol' or 'Italian-Tirol' (*ibid.*, 340), which basically coincides with the district of Trentino. Busk's general observations, however, are here largely cast from the perspective of the German-speaking Tyroleans. Distinct from them, the paradigm of the Italian-speaking Tyroleans are typified by a rather 'sunnier and less thoughtful' character, 'often to be traced in their legendary stories' (Busk 1874, 343): 'Those of the Germans are nearly always made to convey some moral lesson', the Italians, instead, 'seem satisfied with making them means of amusement, without caring that they should be a medium of instruction' (*ibid.*). However, this information is left on

the margin of Busk's hybrid guidebook, which, for marketing reasons, dwells, more traditionally, on the artistic and tourist attractions of the Tyrolean valleys, following a repertoire already popularised by standard travel literature.

Not all British reportages from Tyrol shared Busk's virtuous portrayal. The hunter and mountaineer William Adolph Baillie Grohman (1851–1921), for instance, in defending his relatively harsh depiction of the Tyrolean people in the second edition of his *Tyrol and the Tyrolese: The People and the Land in their Social, Sporting, and Mountaineering Aspects* (1877), only partly rejected the accusation of having portrayed 'the people of the land in the mountains' as 'treacherously cruel', admitting that their 'rough and shaggy coat' might have hidden 'the finer points of the Tyrolese character from the gaze of the stranger' (*ibid.*, vi). But he could not to avoid reaffirming – 'to convey a perfectly truthful picture to [his] reader's mind' – the existence of a 'dark side' in that character: 'roughness and a certain freedom of morals' (*ibid.*), accompanied by an almost fanatic Catholic faith, which allegedly brings them to 'not make the slightest difference between Protestant and Jew, but terms every non-Roman Catholic a Jew', and a fervent devotion driven less by the love for God than by 'the shunning of the word "devil"', which 'illustrates in a remarkable manner [their] dense ignorance on religious matters' (*ibid.*, 53-54). In fact, Grohman's book reads more like a pleasurable collection of adventurous sketches than a folkloric travel book. In any case, Grohman's and Busk's books did not manage to equate the success of Edwards' bestseller, which aptly blended ingredients of folkloric, cultural and historical nature with splendid descriptions of peaks and mountain sceneries.

Reginald Farrer's Rock Garden

If perhaps the most spectacular tourist exploitation of King Laurin's legend and the fairy atmosphere that surrounds it was the refashioning of the already

mentioned *Stabilimento Alpino* in Madonna di Campiglio into the *Grand Hotel des Alpes*, with the Jugendstil decoration by Gottfried Hofer (Grazioli 2006; Recusani and Gregianin 2006); the ultimate legacy of the saga, bearing significance for Britain, is undoubtedly Reginald Farrer's (1880-1920) English rock garden (Fisher, Cox, and Ingwersen 1933; Allan 1974, 172-199; Illingworth and Routh 1991; Shulman 2004; Elliott 2011). There is no need here to illustrate in detail the kaleidoscopic figure of this writer, traveller, dalesman, botanist, gardener and planthunter (Morgan 2004; Shulman 2004; Taylor 1951, 116-160; Fisher, Cox, and Ingwersen 1933), who developed in England the enduring trend of the rock garden (Farrer 1919 and 1907; Thonger 1907; Thomas 2004; Elliott 1991 and 2011). This development, it is relevant here to notice, occurred significantly under the label of the Dolomites and the fabulous aura of King Laurin.

The adoption this duplicitous label in Farrer's *The Dolomites: King Laurin's Garden* (1913) reveals the success of the Austrian tourist industry during the Edwardian period. That Farrer knew and used Christomannos' *Dolomitenstrasse* ('winding and looping like a little white snake in very bad convulsions') to move about the Dolomite district is amply testified throughout his book; and equally evident is that he enjoyed to spend his nights at the *Christomannoshaus*, 'the largest and most sumptuous of all the Alpine Club-huts' (Farrer 1913, 82 and 76). He refused, however, to make use of the 'big public motors, grey as destroyers and swift as smoke', made available by the Austrian tourist organisations, for they 'whirl their clients round to Cortina in a couple of hours or so, and thence again through the utmost wonders of the district' (*ibid.*, 18) – too quickly for Farrer's taste and too limited in their tourist itineraries.

But even if he preferred to drive at his leisure on a chartered carriage (*ibid.*, 19), he probably still consulted Karl Felix Wolff's monumental *Monographie der Dolomitenstraße* (1908) – the perfect and most detailed companion to

King Laurin's Garden

Christomannos' road. Here, the tale of King Laurin is retold with clear references to the views one could see along the way, providing a useful tool for travelling as well as for writing about the 'Tyrolean' Dolomites – a telling and pioneering example on how the legend was used for tourist purposes. Farrer could have also seen Bruno Goldschmitt's (1881-1964) frescoes (Fig. 8.14) with scenes taken from the tale in the main hall of the Park Hotel Laurin in Bozen (1911) or the Laurin cycle of six paintings by Ignaz Stolz (1868-1953), exhibited since 1900 in the Völser Weiher Inn (Müller 2006, 219–220; Stampfer 1979; Wolff 1932). At the time of Farrer's travels to the Dolomites, the name of Laurin was certainly firmly associated with South Tyrol and promoted through Christomannos' tourist 'machine'.



Fig. 8.14 - Bruno Goldschmitt (1881-1964), *King Laurin and Dietrich's von Bern Knights*, 1911, fresco, Park Hotel Laurin, 'Laurin Bar', Bolzano/Bozen.

Farrer, however, was not interested in acting as a sponsor of Christomannos. Written in a self-consciously sparkling prose and firmly anchored to the genre

of the travel book, his *King Laurin's Garden* (1913) traced in Tyrol a new 'untrodden' itinerary between peaks and valleys of the Dolomites with strong autobiographical undertones. This new itinerary allowed British tourists to cultivate a passion for Alpine flowers and plants promoted already in classic mountaineering literature. Suffice it here to mention the 'Additional Notes' by Percy Groom to the article 'Climate and Vegetation of the Alps', included in the new edition of John Ball's *Hints and Notes, Practical and Scientific, for Travellers in the Alps: Being a Revision of the General Introduction to the 'Alpine Guide'*, edited on behalf of the Alpine Club by William August Brevoort Coolidge (1899, cviii–cxxi). Groom's 'scientific' and 'practical' hints on Alpine flora testified this interest among British readers and gardeners, by lingering extensively on the colourful patterns of plants and flowers:

It is a well known fact that the colours or shades of Alpine flowers change when the plants are cultivated in gardens. In any flowering plants in which flowers having different tints occur it is often found that the yellow flowers are the simplest and most lowly organised, and that the blue flowers are the most highly organised. Further, it is known that, speaking broadly in a family the successive advance of the complication of the flowers corresponds more or less to the colours in the following order: yellow, white, pink, red, crimson, violet, blue (*ibid.*, cxvi).

The knowingness of the 'well known fact' mentioned by Groom refers here to the learned bibliographical apparatus of scientific disquisitions appended at the end of the section. But it refers also, in the context of the guide, to the challenging demand of collecting and growing these flowers in an English garden, in conditions not only climatically but also chemically – thinking of the nature of the English soil – utterly different from the ones to be found in the Alpine heights.

It is precisely this challenge that Reginald Farrer, 'the patron saint of rock gardening for much of the twentieth century' (Elliott 2011, 20), took up in establishing the foundations of the modern English rock garden, theoretically and practically illustrated, in several books and an exemplary Alpine garden at Ingleborough in Yorkshire (Farrer 1907; 1908; 1912; 1919; Elliott 1991). The idea was to reproduce in England the chromatic and scenic effects of a Alpine landscape, inspired by his own promenades in the Dolomite region but also by the 'sketches' of British mountaineers, such as the one, already seen, drawn by Freshfield in the heights of Falzarego ('There were bays of red rhododendrons, pools of the larger gentian, ... rivers of forget-me-nots, lilies tawny and white, brilliant arnica, fragrant nigritella', Freshfield 1915, 426; for the context, see here note 9).

Of the three great traditions garden historians have distinguished to unravel the putative origins of this particular gardening practice (Elliott 2011, 9–10) – (1) 'the decorative assemblage of different types of stones and other objects thought to be analogous to stones (crystals, corals, fossils) in grottoes, fountains and cabinet of curiosities' (16th-17th centuries); (2) 'the appreciation of rock scenery' and their 'incorporation within landscape gardens' (18th century); and (3) 'the attempt to grow rock plants, whether native or exotic' (19th century) – the third one became Farrer's specialty, in the wake of the great tradition of picturesque garden designers such as Humphry Repton, Joseph Paxton, James Pulham, James Backhouse and William Robinson (*ibid.*, 10-17; Daniels 1999).

The Victorian rock garden Farrer inherited from that tradition had progressively attempted to exhibit 'approximations of the effects of genuine geological phenomena, observable in mountain regions' (*ibid.*, 11), following these criteria: the chosen rocks ought to be of the same sort; their arrangement ought to suggest natural stratification, with their vertices pointing upward; their appearance ought to be of a natural outcrop and emerge not from a neatly

mown lawn but from the sort of genuine ground from which they might spring in nature (*ibid.*). In some cases, rock gardens went so far to reproduce in scale memorable Alpine sceneries, such as the garden at Hoole House, in Cheshire, with a scale model of the Chamonix Alps (1838), complete with crushed glass to simulate ice, or the rock garden at Kew, replicating a Pyrenean stream bed; by the end of the century, it was not unusual to find rockworks replicating the forms of say the Khyber Pass, the Matterhorn or even Mount Fuji (*ibid.*, 12).

This increasingly popular penchant for Alpine miniatures reached its pinnacle with the monumental garden conceived by Sir Frank Crisp (1843-1919, see McConnell 2004b) at Friar Park, in Henley-on-Thames, where the public could admire a sensational Alpine garden (Fig. 8.15), embellished with three highly decorated underground caverns and topped with a 20 foot high replica of the Matterhorn in scale, capped with a rock taken from the original (Elliott 2011, 18). Farrer's way was utterly distinct from this trend. In criticising this voyeuristic 'Alpine peepshow', exhibiting a phantasmagoria of 'beetling crags', 'frowning cliffs', 'tufa boulders', 'small paths' and 'rocky steps' culminating in a maze of 'rockwork tunnels' with 'sufficient light to reveal rows of artificial stalactites' (Thonger 1907, 12), Farrer pointed out that

Stone, in nature, is never disconnected; each block is always, as it were, a word in the sentence. Remember that, urgently: boulder leads to boulder in an ordered sequence. A dump of disconnected rocks, with discordant forms and angles, is mere gibberish (Farrer 1912, 12).

The same appeal to coherency and consistency appeared already in *My Rock Garden* (1907), in which Farrer – again against 'Mr Crisp's model Matterhorn' – tried to impress upon his readers the importance of creating a rock garden paying attention to its distinct 'individuality, that is to say, not a mere reckless jostle of stones, dropped there anyhow for Sedums and Campanulas to run about over' (Farrer 1907, 16).

Farrer's method for achieving this unity subtended a different gaze on and a different acquaintance with the Alpine landscape – a gaze particularly attentive to seize not only the material, compositional and chromatic effects of mountain sceneries, but also to capture and replicate their intimate spiritual psychology: 'all things organic and inorganic, all rocks and mountains and trees must ultimately become Buddha, perfect and unchanging' (Farrer 1908, 74). The most admired mountains are therefore transformed into 'enormous pilgrims in the road of salvation' (*ibid.*), and treated as movable 'types' or 'characters', rather than identifiable 'actors', for staging at home a dramatic play – 'The Matterhorn, arrogant and terrible, has splendour and generosity; the Wetterhorn is obviously good-tempered; Mont Blanc and Mont Rose are two stout and cosy dowagers, Mrs. White and Mrs. Pink; even the Weisshorn has in its beauty an energetic fury that suits well with a pilgrim on the Way' (*ibid.*, 75).



Fig. 8.15 - *The Matterhorn at Friar Park*, from Crisp's guidebook to his garden (1914).

Described in these mystical terms, rock gardening becomes a spiritual voyage closely linked to the physical travels to some elected destinations. In

King Laurin's Garden (1913), this journey of the mind is particularly challenged by the fantastical juxtaposition of the Dolomite bizarre shapes ('Indeed, these strange mountains have a fascination beyond all other ranges', *ibid.*, 5), which make the apprehension of their irreproducible 'character' chiming with mystery:

King Laurin's garden is a land of magic, enclosed by peaks like frozen flames. It was long held an impenetrable and enchanted country: mystery surrounded it, and the splendid terror of its pinnacles. Old faiths had their refuge in the unhistoried tranquillity of its secret places, and even when the unsatisfied emotions of the nineteenth century began veering more and more eagerly to mountains, more and more stimulating in their sympathetic austerity, it was many years before the traveller dared to turn his steps into wildernesses so mysterious (Farrer 1913, 1).

The unearthing of this mystery is credited, once again, to Amelia Edwards ('Switzerland had been for several generations the tennis-court of our suburbs before an audacious maiden lady at last decided to embark upon a tour in those inhospitable ranges', *ibid.*). But Farrer invites his readers to a different tour – 'When all the tourists have come and fed, and prowled, and gone again, there will always, after all, remain a hundred thousand nooks and corners among the hills to which their feet will never care to ascend. Let us fly ourselves, if we will, to these' (*ibid.*, 4-5).

In the Edwardian era the situation had significantly changed from its Victorian antecedent. Edwards' 'untroddenness' was lost – both in King Laurin's peaks as well as in his valleys – and the label 'Dolomites' had definitely replaced any reference to his magical kingdom:

King Laurin's Garden is called 'the Dolomites' to-day, and the King is gone. Perhaps he lingers secretly still in his Rose Garden up above the

Antermoja Lake, but I have never met him there, and his roses are no longer to be found amid the greyness of that desolation. And the barriers of mountain have proved false, and yearly floods of trespassers flow in and champ their mayonnaise of chicken in fat hotels beneath the walls of the very Marmolata herself. But of those hordes too small a percentage, even now, is English. And since the wonderland of Europe is open to-day to the traveller, I am embarking on this book in the hopes of tempting thither yet more and more of my fellow-countrymen (*ibid.*, 2).

Although left inexplicit, the reference to the success of the Austrian tourist business filters through this passage as an agent that destroyed a land that had remained for long uncontaminated; and the 'small percentage' of English tourists traveling to Tyrol is perhaps also an effect of these recent 'vulgar' developments, despite the popularity that the Dolomite mountains clearly enjoyed in British literature and conversations ('The Dolomites are popular in people's mouths ... To judge, indeed, by literature and conversations at dinner, one would imagine that this district was a sort of annexe to Hyde Park', *ibid.*, 9).

And yet the times of Ruskin's criticism against the touristification of the Alps were gone; and Farrer did not omit dismissing, with a certain forbearance, 'the superior tone of those who lament the vulgarization of the mountains' as 'pure egoism' (*ibid.*, 3):

And how can mountains be vulgarized? Vulgarify begins at home, in the vulgar, and can live nowhere else. The more people go to the mountains, the better for the people, and no worse for the mountains. The crassest chicken-champer must certainly derive more good from meals beneath the Schlern or the Great Vernel than if he sits stuffily over sausages in Hamburg or Harrogate (*ibid.*, 3-4).

The 'dance of death' performed before the Alps by Ruskin's 'enlightened' tourists (Ozturk 2012, 92) becomes through Farrer's gaze the 'dancing glory of the Pordoi or the Belvedere' (Farrer 1913, 7). The moderate acquiescence to the

tourist industry ('as for me, I shall certainly always go up in whatever funiculars there are, and leave the genuine mountaineer to curl his lip at me in a contempt which I will neither feel nor assume towards weaker vessels than myself', *ibid.*, 5) is sustained by a different consciousness that drives Farrer's internal gaze – his 'rockwork' ('At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the terms "rockwork" and "rock garden" could have been used interchangeably', Elliott 2011, 9) is not the one of the mountaineer but the one of the gardener, and as such it remains equally undisturbed by both the crowd of tourists mobbing around Christomannos' hotels and the crowd of mountaineers seeking new ways to collect their summits.



Fig. 8.16 - Eduard Theodor Compton (1849-1921), *Misurina*, from Farrer (1913).

Away from any controversy – be it political, linguistic or cultural – the Dolomites cease to be viewed as a debatable land. They become through the gardener's eyes a mysterious landscape of the mind, an irresistible riddle of shapes and colours to be solved through a process of self-discovery – like a timeless dream devoid of any reference to the external reality, enclosed in a square between competing emerging modernities:

King Laurin's Garden

The Dolomites form a rough square upon the map of Europe. Those blank, bald spaces with which one beguiles one's fancy at railway-stations, wondering over blobs connected by straight lines, like some bacterial diagram of a disease, give one no notion that between the blobs called Innsbruck, Lienz, Belluno, Verona, is contained a paradise of mountains more wonderful than anything in a Chinese dream (*ibid.*, 10).

And so this paradisiac square becomes extractable from its historical, economic and natural context to be transformed into an ideal English rock garden under the influence of King Laurin's spell ('I cannot escape the charm of the Dolomites ... They made pounded mincemeat of me, rolled me out, smashed my snobberies flat, and dismissed me at the end their insatiable worshipper. Or perhaps it was the spell of King Laurin laid upon me', *ibid.*, 6). The beloved Misurina, for instance, exhibited in Farrer's book through a beautiful painting by Edward Theodore Compton (Fig. 8.16), configures itself 'as a convenient half-way house between London and Brighton' (*ibid.*) – a welcoming refuge to be sought after in England, 'when clouds and gloom and rottenness rule the garden' (*ibid.*).

Notes

¹ Freshfield translates here Ratzel (1896, 79): 'Man muss nicht vergessen, dass den schweizerischen Zentralaplen noch kein ausgebildetes Südalpensystem gegenüberliegt, das mit den Bergamasker Alpen seine erstmalige, kräftige Entwicklung erfährt. Damit aber ist dann auch sogleich ein besonderes italienisches Alpenland gegeben, das von hier an durch die Brescianer, Vicentiner und Venezianer Alpen sich bis auf den Westabfall der Julianischen Alpen fortsetzt. Die Westalpen theilt Italien mit Frankreich, die Centralaplen mit der Schweiz, die Südalpen sind dort ganz italienisch, wo sie selbständig hervortreten'.

² The Austrian Alpine Club ('Österreichische Alpenverein') was founded in Vienna in 1862, five years after the Alpine Club in London; the German equivalent ('Deutscher Alpenverein') was created in Munich in 1869; in 1873 they united to form a federation ('Deutschen und Oesterreichischen Alpenverein'), becoming the largest Alpine Club in the world. They remained in this form until 1938 (Holt 2008, 16–20).

³ It is possible that here Freshfield caricaturises the alpinist and geographer Ernst Adolf Schaubach (1800-1850), author of a monumental work on the 'German Alps' (*Die deutschen Alpen: Ein Handbuch für Reisende durch Tyrol, Österreich, Steyermark*, Jena: 1846), whose fourth volume is devoted to Central and South Tyrol (*Das Gebiet der Etsch und angrenzenden Fluß-Gebiete: Das mittlere und südliche Tyrol*, see Schaubach 1867, Vol. 4).

⁴ The unknown 'learned doctor' to whom here Freshfield refers and translates from is Dr. P. G. Lorentz: 'Es gibt wohl kaum einen verlässeneren und unbekannteren Winkel in unseren Deutschen Alpen als den Adamello- und Ortles-Stock, besonderes auf der Lombardischen Seite' (Lorentz 1865, 1). The *Petermanns geographische Mittheilungen*, the journal in which Lorentz's article appeared, is probably the 'leading geographical magazine of Germany' to which Freshfield refers.

⁵ That in the Italian irredentist discourse this line of demarcation crossed the territories of the so-called 'Three Venices' ('Tre Venezie') – Trent, Venice, Trieste – was well known to the British audience assisting the lecture is testified by Freshfield's self-

explanatory usage of the term 'irredentism'. Venice is in fact evoked throughout the lecture as the historical point of reference for further grounding the Italianness of the region (e.g. 'The pass served afterwards, for the commerce of Venice, as a branch of the Brenner', 428).

⁶ The wording recalls Freshfield's description of the same region in his *Italian Alps*, forty years earlier (1875, 305): 'So far as I know, no great painter has chosen a subject from the basin of the Adige. Yet here, even more than in Titian's country and the Val di Mel, all the breadth and romance of Italian landscape is united to Alpine grandeur and nobleness of form'.

⁷ The printed version of Freshfield's lecture is accompanied by a series of twelve photographs illustrating the beautiful Alpine scenery of the region, without any direct reference to the arguments presented in the text – the function of these images is rather evocative than illustrative. The pictures, however, must have been shown during the Royal Geographical Society lecture, since Lord Bryce mentioned them: 'These conflicts over glaciers and among those tremendous pinnacles of which such superb views have been shown this evening will have a new and special interest to us since we have heard the geography and orography of the region explained' (Freshfield 1915, 435).

⁸ In illustrating the battlefield of Col di Lana, near Falzarego, Freshfield soberly recalled: 'When I strolled up it [Falzarego Pass] years ago in early July, the broad pastures of the Incisa Alp, on which it looks down, was more gloriously arrayed than any Alpine meadow I have ever seen. There were bays of red rhododendrons, pools of the larger gentian (*G. acaulis*), rivers of forget-me-nots, lilies tawny and white, brilliant arnica, fragrant nigritella' (1915, 426).

⁹ Freshfield's iconographic criterion seems here to recycle a long-lasting debate over the Italianness of Ticino and the distinction between north and south on both geographical and ethnographical grounds (Scaramellini 2008, 203–229).

¹⁰ After relating this idea ('the citadel or the ramparts of Italy', Freshfield 1915, 414) to 'historians and poets', such as Livy, Tacitus and Petrarch, Freshfield rejects it on an iconographic ground, using a cosmopolitan image taken from the visual arts: 'The Dolomite groups would be correctly figured in the Impressionist maps of which we

have so many, not as lines but dots; big dots, no doubt, scattered about in a region of valleys and pastoral heights'; figured as 'dots' and not as 'great walls' or 'sheer ramparts', the Dolomites could not – in the past as well as in the present – prevent external invasions or migrations.

¹¹ The Vetta d'Italia (Glockenkarkopf, 2,911m), or the 'Peak of Italy', was the name the irredentist Ettore Tolomei gave to the point of the Adriatic Sea's drainage basin, identifying, thus, the physical limit of northern Italy (Cammelli and Beikircher 2002, 316; Burger 1966, 33; Hartner-Seberich 1960). The Cima Roma is a peak in the Brenta Dolomites.

¹² By the time of Amelia B. Edwards (1873), there were only three roads leading to the Dolomite district – from Venice, from Bolzano/Bozen, and from Dobbiaco/Toblach; Alexander Robertson (1896) gave five more – from Tezze, Feltre, Belluno, Trent and Niederdorf; Marion L. Davidson (1912) added nineteen, although often overlapping (Davidson 1912, 26). And yet the most spectacular one remained Christomannos' 'splendidly engineered Neue Dolomiten Strasse' (*ibid.* 17).

¹³ Reginald Farrer, for instance, remembers it as such in writing, in 1914-15, about the road bringing from 'Gan Chan' to 'Chebson' in China: 'And there, indeed, were the level windings of that road clearly visible, coiling like a Dolomitenstrasse in a thread of white round the flanks of the range' (Farrer 1922, 201). See also the account on 'The New Dolomitenstrasse from Toblach to Botzen', which appeared in *The English Illustrated Magazine* in 1913 (Reddie 1913).

¹⁴ The 'old writer' is possibly Ernst Adolf Schaubach, who reports local beliefs about King Laurin (Schaubach 1867, 4: 197–198).

¹⁵ Ilbert's article, 'King Laurin's Rose-Garden', is aptly quoted in the opening essay of Stephen's *The Playground of Europe* (1871, 22).

¹⁶ The legend is to be connected with the history of mining in the region and with the mythical type of the dwarf-miner, which we can also find inflected in the tale of Dolasilla (Wilsdorf 1987, 166–194; Vaccari 2000; Degasperi 2006, 7–17); but see here, more in general, Chapter 2.

¹⁷ See, for example, the *Michelin Green Guide to Italy* (Burley 2012), under Passo Falzarego: 'Nearing Cortina the pass cuts through the Tofane and skirts the barren landscape of the Cinque Torri, which inspired Tolkien when he wrote *The Lord of the Rings*'; or in Damien Simonis' *Lonely Planet Guide to Italy*, 'British writer JRR Tolkien was so overawed by Val Badia and the Alpe di Fanes that he is said to have used them for inspiration in *Lord of the Rings*' (Simonis 2010, 339).

¹⁸ According to Claudio Bonvecchio, the influence of the Dolomite landscape on Tolkien does not imply his knowledge of the various and rich repertoire of 'dwarf legends', linked with the history of mining in the region (Bonvecchio 2008, 262; see also Degasperis 2006, 7–17 and Wilsdorf 1987, 166–194).

¹⁹ The same remark furnishes the introduction of Busk's 1871 *Households Stories from the Land of Hofer, or Popular Myths of Tirol*: 'Though it is a little, out-of-the-way country whose cry is seldom heard in the newspapers, though it exercises little influence in political complications, the character of its people is one which, next after that of our own, has a claim to our esteem and admiration' (Busk 1871, 1–2).

²⁰ Edwards 1873 had distributed the royal titles differently: 'I have called the Civetta, Queen of the Dolomites; and so, in like manner, I would call the Pelmo, King' (216); but see Farrer 1913, 68: 'there stands the entire colossus of the Marmolata, Queen of all the Dolomites'.

²¹ Freshfield (1875, 380) discusses Busk mainly in a linguistic appendix on the difference in spelling between 'Tyrol', which he prefers as the philologically more accurate version, and its local variant 'Tirol', defended by Busk as the 'country's own nomenclature' (Busk 1874, xix). The same discussion occurs also in Stoddard (1912, 2–3), specifying that 'Of late years it has become common to write Tyrol in the German language Tirol, but many adhere to the old spelling'. Grohman (1877, 52) mentions Busk as 'a recent able authoress', who 'has given a rich store of myths, superstitions, and interesting instances of what Germans call "Volksaberglaube", the superstition of the populace of Tyrol'; but just to point out some of her shortcomings.

²² The argument seems to rehearse a point made by Ruskin: 'The men who are formed by the schools and polished by the society of the capital, may yet in many ways have their powers shortened by the absence of natural scenery; and the mountaineer,

King Laurin's Garden

neglected, ignorant, and unambitious, may have been taught things by the clouds and streams which he could not have learned in a college, or a coterie' (Ruskin 1903, 6: 438).



EPILOGUE

Dolomite (English) Heritage

In the summer of 2010, Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi agreed to act as a speaker for a 30-second TV spot to be broadcasted on the national television throughout the holiday season. The spot, subsidized by the Italian Ministry of Tourism, had an institutional character and a propagandistic overtone:

What you see here is your Italy, a unique country, made of sky, sun and sea, but also of history, culture and art; it is an extraordinary country that you still have to discover. Use your vacations to better know Italy – your magic Italy.¹

The slideshow accompanying the spot epitomized the nation through a series of spectacular aerial views of Florence, Venice, Rome, as well as Capri, Portofino, Stupinigi and the Greek temples of Sicily, ending with some triumphal close-ups of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, located in the Vatican City – a foreign country. In the political ambience of the time, sky, sun, sea, history, culture and art acted as the ingredients of an internationally recognized landscape heritage, both natural and cultural, to mask the disputable reputation of a country plagued by media tycoons, sexual scandals, organized criminality, and political corruption (Ginsborg 2001 and 2004).

The spot was not criticized for the false consciousness instilled by its manipulative ideology, but because the landscape scenery it portrayed did not include mountains. On the physical map, Italy visibly figures as one of the most mountainous countries of Europe. But in Berlusconi's 'Magic Italy', 'made of sky,

sun and sea', mountains were omitted – 'Mountains do not fit very well in [Italy's] canonical representation; too wild and too "northern", they seem to lack the typical ingredients of *Italianness*' (Armiero 2011, 1).

The omission, however, did not go unnoticed. Energized by the recent inscription of the Dolomites in the UNESCO World Heritage List (2009), the province of Trento made a complaint on behalf of all provinces of Italy – from the Alps to Etna – whose territory is pre-eminently mountainous (Tosin 2010). The complaint did not generate any official apologies for the oversight. The promotion of the Dolomites that Italians regularly watch on television or read on newspapers and magazines continues to be sponsored, at the regional level, by the prosperous and autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano/Bozen – not by Italy, on whose map the Dolomites figure, since 1918, in their entirety.

In the country of art par excellence, beautiful Mediterranean coastlines, amiable hills, tangible traces of culture, and a highly diversified network of historical cities proudly exhibiting their millennial past, the rough and inhospitable natural landscape epitomized by the Dolomite Mountains can not reflect the image of a nation that gave birth to the European Renaissance, in a similar way in which the Lake Districts, the Scottish Highlands, Welsh Snowdonia or the Palladian landscapes of the English countryside immediately evoke in the mind of travellers and citizens alike highly recognizable images of Great Britain (Olwig 2002; Matless 1998; Daniels 1993). In Italy, wild 'nature does not have a remarkable place in its public representation' (Armiero 2011, 1). Italy does not need the Dolomites to forge its natural and cultural landscape, in the same way in which, for instance, it needs Tuscany (Gaggio 2011); and the memory of the war, so carefully sustained through museums, memorials and monuments spread throughout the Italian-speaking Dolomite valleys, serves perhaps to obliterate the forceful and shameful Italianization of South Tyrol during the Fascist period (Motta 2012; Kaplan 2000; Alcock 1992).

Historical debates around the territoriality and ownership of the Dolomite landscape in the nineteenth-century continue to this day in ways that are highly charged with symbolic meaning. I want here briefly to draw attention to some of the more contemporary interpretations and symbolic re-circulations of these debates in the wake of the recent inclusion of the Dolomites in the UNESCO World Heritage List (see Appendix). As we have seen in the concluding chapter, already in the Victorian period, the mountaineer Douglas Freshfield highlighted the contentiousness of the Dolomites' geographic and political position at the edge of the border drawn between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Kingdom of Italy. Refiguring a concept that could already cast them as such in the Romantic period, the Dolomites constitute a landscape that is still 'debatable'. Following the methodological framework offered by Collins (2004), implicit throughout this work, I argue that these contested symbols have recirculated in further loops of emotional energy – sometimes obviously, some times less so – up to the present day.

Despite Freshfield's determination in arguing for an Italian cultural claim and identity for the entire Dolomite region, today the debatable nature of the territory remains complex (Grote 2012; Kezich 2011; Wolf 1962; Cole and Wolf 1999; Burger 1966; Alcock 1992; Motta 2012). If it is true that the outcome of the Great War secured the Dolomites within the borders of Italy, they stretch still today across different linguistic, ethnic and historically disputed frontiers, traversing a new zone of prestige in which competing memories play a major role in defining what remains a sensitive hybridized and vulnerable identity. Reinhold Messner's eponymous network of five private, contemporary museums in the region provide a useful case study to sound out some of the contested issues connected to this territory and to possibly unravel the extent to which the English legacy in the Dolomites play a role within that hybrid

outlook. Is it a forgotten heritage? Is it a neglected aspect in the making of the Dolomite cultural landscape? Is it still an English heritage somehow figuratively hidden in the clouds?

Elements, inflections, memories or layers of English heritage revealed in this work are now, it appears, exploited by the heritage industry to complement or perhaps counterbalance Messner's attempt to promote the Dolomites as part of a global mountain heritage freed from any national or local considerations. As the Dolomites moved from a site of contested identity in the Victorian period into a UNESCO World Heritage Site in recent times, the establishment of the Messner's Mountain Museums (2002-2011) serves as a pertinent reminder of the competing factions that lay claim to the cultural heritage of the Dolomites not least in their efforts to hide them.

Born in South Tyrol, Messner is today universally regarded as the greatest living mountaineer, interpreting the modern tradition of travel as a form of life (Boomers 2004). He was the first ever to climb an 8000m mountain without guides, and the first to reach the top of Everest without the use of supplementary oxygen. The undoubted charisma and success, derived from his spectacular ascents and subsequent writing career, has allowed him the scope to establish the Messner Mountain Museums network (neatly abbreviated as MMM) in his native South Tyrol (Hempel 2011). The whole network pursues the general objective of protecting endangered global mountain heritage, with each museum taking on a distinct emphasis. Visitors of the five MMM find themselves immersed in sites already culturally charged for their natural beauty, historical importance and geological significance, beholding a kaleidoscopic repertoire of mountain practices, mountain objects and mountain people, ranging from Western mountaineering to the mystical experience of Tibetan Buddhism, from Alpine memorabilia to mountain painting, from ethnographic rituals to ecologically-minded tourism.

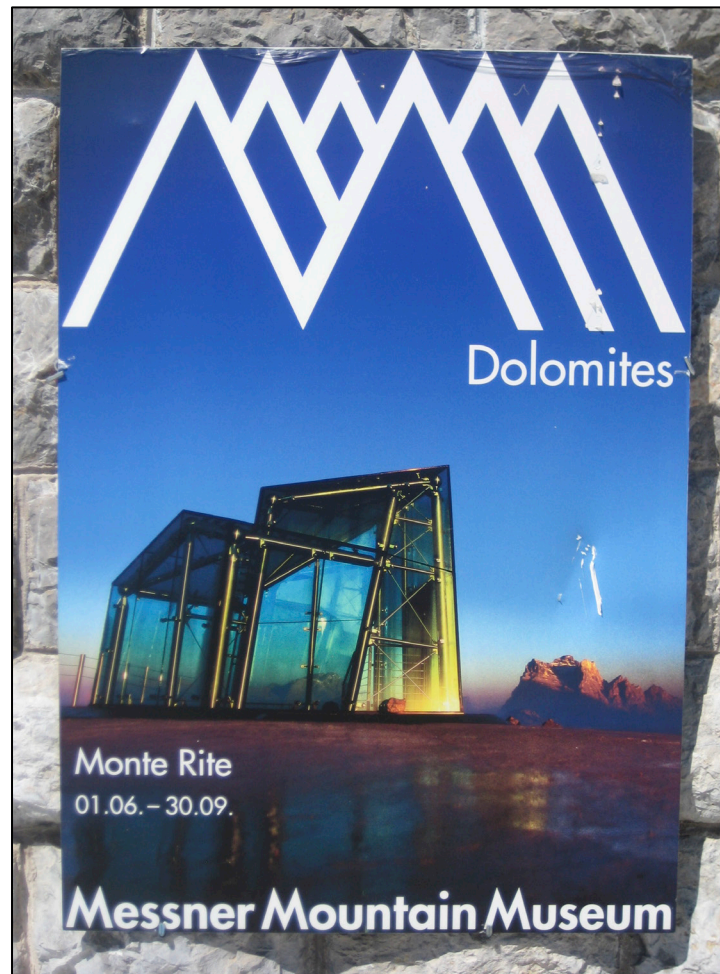


Fig. 9.1 - Poster of MMM Monte Rite, 'Museum in the Clouds', in the Dolomite region (2181m).

The MMM Rite, housed within a Italian First World War fort at the peak of Monte Rite (2181m), for instance, is tellingly entitled 'The Museum in the Clouds' (Fig. 9.1); MMM Firmian, housed in Sigmundskron Castle, one of the historical landmarks of Tyrolean patriotism near Bolzano/Bozen, is 'Man's Encounter with the Mountains'; MMM Juval, the mountain top castle and summer residence of Messner himself in Val Venosta, is 'The Magic of the Mountain'; MMM Ortles, a contemporary building in Solda/Sulden by South Tyrolean architect Arnold Gapp, is 'The Terror of Ice and Darkness'; and MMM Ripa, located in Bruneck Castle in Brunico/Brunkeck is 'The Mountain Heritage'. The lyrical and evocative titles of Messner's museums provide clear indication of his thematic approach to mountains.

At MMM Rite, ‘amidst the clouds’, despite its location in a Italian WWI fort near Cortina d’Ampezzo, a place always outside the region of South Tyrol, Messner’s museum labelling revealingly forgets the legacy of the localized meaning of the museum built within a fortification built by Italians to defend Italy from an Austria that had, at the out break of the Great War, the control of the whole Tyrol (including Trentino). Messner’s concern is instead with a global patrimony of humanity inscribed in mountain landscapes, regardless of whether those landscapes are of the Dolomite Mountains, the Andes, or the Himalaya. This approach is no doubt sensationalistic, but it removes quite drastically any contentiousness about an acknowledgement of the local and historical ingredients that form the cultural landscape of the Dolomites. A descriptive label at the Monte Rite museum exemplifies this global, but diluted approach, with Messner stating ‘We must now see the Dolomites through new eyes as a continuing process of the Creation and as an immense asset for humanity’ – obviously not as a contested territory.

The MMM network, and its ethos, relies on the international glamour of Messner himself. Critics could speculate that the network is part of a personal monument to the exploits of Messner’s feats and establishes a veritable cult of one of the greatest alpinists of all time. In the museum’s shops, for example, adjacent to the main displays, not only can one find a vast and almost exclusive offering of Messner’s own books but also cosmetics branded with the names of the mountains climbed by him. Visitors can purchase a ‘Mount Everest’ or ‘Nanga Parbat’ eau de toilette, or indeed MMM organic jam produced on Messner’s private farm (Fig. 9.2). Meanwhile, the explanatory apparatus of his labelling in the exhibition spaces themselves is virtually absent, only inspired thoughts from the writings of Messner himself are dotted about the displays.



Fig. 9.2 - Messner's branded cosmetics at MMM Juval.

Another poster at MMM Rite evokes, in much plainer terms, the sophisticated conundrum that perplexed Leslie Stephen in the nineteenth century when he thought about Mont Blanc: 'Where does [the mountain] end, and where do I begin?' (see Chapter 3). The poster quite explicitly answers the question by portraying Messner himself merging with the mountain (Fig. 9.3) – his persona and the landscape are equally imposing and mutually representative.

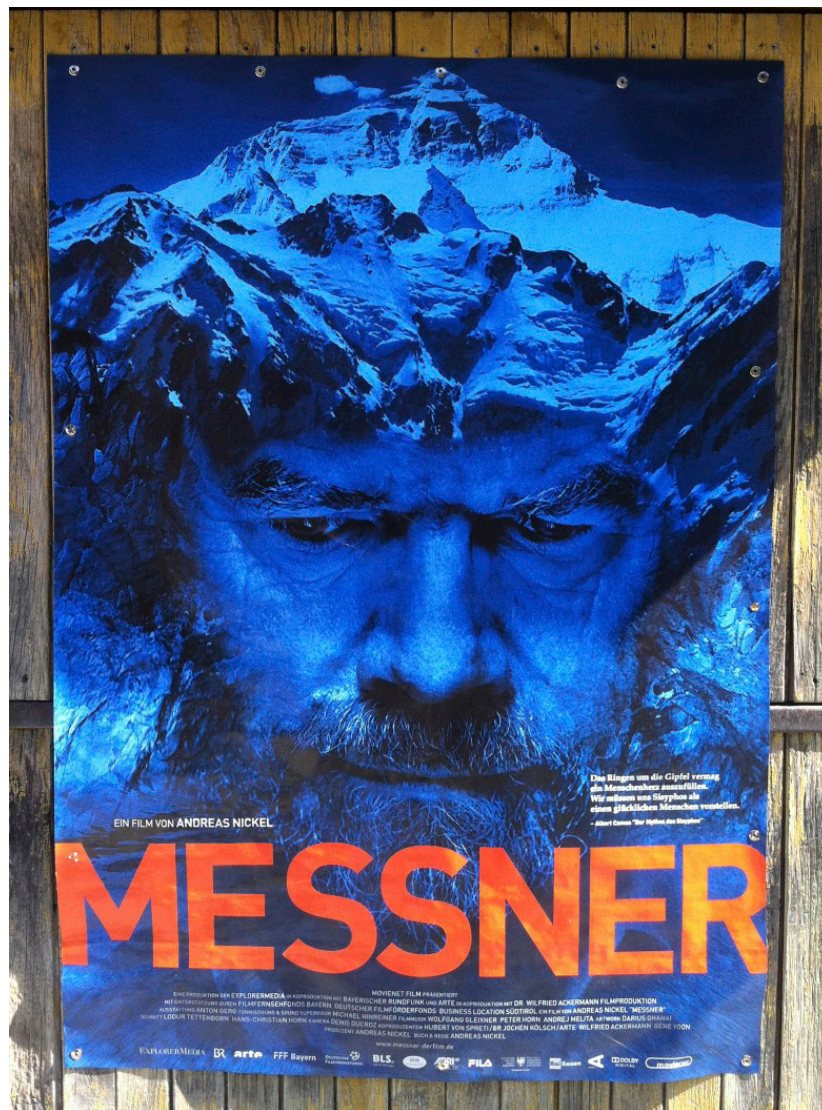


Fig. 9.3 - Poster advertising the biographic film 'Messner' by Andreas Nickel at MMM Rite's base camp.

In 2012, I was permitted access to MMM's visitor books – I present here some of the results of a research still in progress. Following a methodology set out by Macdonald and others, I move away from any institutional agenda dominating the underlying structure of the museums' displays, looking to assess the reaction of the 'active audience' (Macdonald 2005, 120; 2007a; 2007b; Anderson 2004; Chhabra, Healy, and Sills 2003). Visitor-book entries allowed me to gain a momentary snapshot into the Messner museum visitors' 'own active meaning-making, and the assumptions, motives, emotions and experiences that this may involve' at the moment of an entry's writing

(Macdonald 2005, 120). What stands out is the 'genre' of comments, which tend to be written as letters addressed directly to Messner. For example:

Dear Reinhold Messner, today I visited the Juval and Ortler museums. Two days before, with some friends (from our mountain rescue group in South Tyrol), I have visited also the Firmian museum. All this was very beautiful. I felt in Himalaya in my own country (MMM Ortler, in German, 10/6/2012).

Comments such as this one offer considerable insights into visitors' opinions, for they represent reactions to museums in situ, differently, say, from comments or reflections generated after the visit on blogs or websites. Visitor books are in fact 'part' of the visit, and allow us to grasp emotions stirred up by a given exhibition. In this particular case, the data has been grouped into three different clusters of issues that illustrate Messner's strategy to dilute the debatable nature of the region. These issues blend together political, cultural and social dimensions of the problem, which remains, in its core, deeply geographical, highlighting the resilience of the place and space divide.

Contravening Messner's goal to overcome local divides through global discourse, the comments below reveal the persistence of the debatable landscape dilemma – the historical and cultural clash between Italy and Austria. These oppositional factors, already highlighted by Freshfield, still counterpoise two worldviews, two storylines, which found their ultimate frontier in the Dolomites. The MMM network becomes an outlet for individuals to make comment, through their sometimes anonymous words, on the palpable, but invisible frontier between North and South, against Messner's strategy to displace this divide by presenting mountain landscapes as a common ground between East and West (Messner 2007; Hempel 2011).

The evergreen spirituality of the mountain is here proposed in its Buddhist or Tibetan version, allowing historical divides to be erased:

Epilogue: Dolomite (English) Heritage

I have breathed the spirit of the civilizations of the ancient and modern world; I felt in Tibet and in the Renaissance, in the Middle Ages and in the years 2000 ... The gods have welcomed me in your home and I felt peace in myself (MMM Juval in Italian).

Not only Messner is the greatest alpinist of all times, but also a true Alpine anthropologist. Our best wishes because mountain life not only preserves itself but also become a laboratory of intercultural dialogue and wise sharing of nature. Long life to South Tyrol!! (MMM Ripa, in Italian, 28/7/2011).

In this context, the association between Tibet and South Tyrol is telling of the extent to which the region still remains a hybridized, complex cultural landscape: 'FREE TIBET' (MMM Ripa, in English, 6/8/2011) and, more provocatively, 'FREE TIBET – FREE SOUTH TYROL!' (MMM Ripa, in English 8/2011, Fig. 9.4).

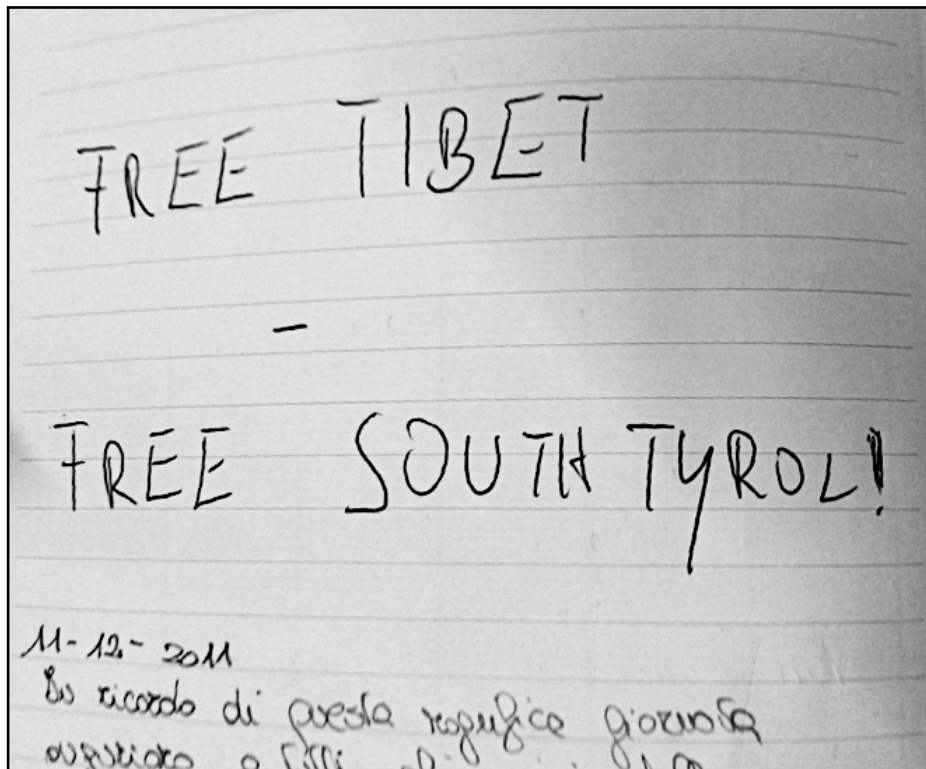


Fig. 9.4 - Visitor book entry, MMM Ripa.

And, accordingly:

We wish Tibet that China could be so generous with it as Italy has been with South Tyrol and that via its past 'tyrants' also Tibet could develop such wealth! (MMM Ripa, in German, 7/8/2011).

Wonderful! Yet some explanation in Italian! would be welcome. Also the Italians pay the ticket!!! (MMM Ripa, in Italian).

This clash between 'local' and 'global' perspectives is inherent to the very nature of Messner's museums, which attempt to convey an aura of global 'space' in sites located in historically and biographically charged 'places' – such as in this charming memory of a visitor who remembers going to school in Bruneck Castle:

Congratulations for the beautiful castle restoration. I spent here 5 years in school – many beautiful memories!!! THANK YOU (MMM Ripa, in German, 23/7/2011).

Messner is often at the centre of these considerations. But his model as alpinist and traveller reveals another long-lasting divide in relation to the encounter with the mountain – the divide between tourists and mountaineers:

I am not an alpinist, but I love South Tyrol – the landscape und true folk music which becomes rarer and rarer (MMM Ortles, in German, 16/3/2011).

I have a dream... to become mountaineer! Great (MMM Ortles, in English – from Romania, 16/7/2011).

Alpinism and tourism! Symbiosis or completion? As always, one has to find a mid-way that makes sense for both parties (MMM Ripa, in German, 9/6/2012).

Unfortunately I am not interested in the art of this kind of museums, in relation to different people and their culture. This could be very telling for you [Messner]. Let the culture in the countries that one can well visit.

Epilogue: Dolomite (English) Heritage

As it concerns me, it would have been more interesting to know the history of this site [Bruneck Castle], as well as of the city and its surroundings (MMM Ripa, in German, 20/6/2012).

Finally somebody who says clear things about tourism victimising mountain people. It is better to visit a museum. Very beautiful! (MMM Ripa, in Italian, 10/7/2011).

What is not clear from visitor-book comments is whether Messner wants to overcome these dichotomies or if he is, in fact, exploiting them. Visitors to the MMM network cannot avoid the impression that a Tyrolean identity is elevated above that of an Italian one. Messner is South Tyrolean; he speaks German as his mother tongue; and German labelling at the MMM always comes before the Italian, followed by English. What is clear, however, is that something is amiss in his conceptualization of a mountain museum/heritage strategy. In the end, all this always risks to remain debatable, given the museums' location, the subject matter of the project and its aims:

With this one we saw all MMM and yet... The idea is very beautiful: all mountain cultures that have something to say have something in common, the struggle for survival, religion, the feeling of belonging to everything. And yet here something is still missing. I miss the story, the legend, the origins, the creation, I don't know... I need something more. Anyway thank you (MMM Ripa, in Italian, 27/7/2011).

What is missing at the MMM is indeed a convincing narrative, confused as it is between the promotion of a global heritage of mountains and the heritage of the Dolomite landscape.

Perhaps it is worth remembering, what a century ago another visitor of both Western and Eastern mountains had to say – Reginald Farrer, the father of the English Rock Garden, who imposed over the Dolomites a seizing gaze attentive not only to the material, compositional and chromatic effects of mountain

sceneries, but also a gaze that captured and replicated their intimate spiritual psychology: 'all things organic and inorganic, all rocks and mountains and trees must ultimately become Buddha, perfect and unchanging' (Farrer 1908, 74). Messner's spirituality, harnessed so extravagantly at the MMM, is already in existence with Farrer, but also with the 'green' or mystical geographies of early twentieth century geographers like Vaughan Cornish and Francis Younghusband. They were keen to promote the aesthetic of the natural, vitalistic, preservationist, and ecological themes in landscape geography – in contrast to the so-called modern and scientific, or the morphological and residual categorization of Sauer, for example. Both Cornish and Younghusband were central figures to the development of Geography as a discipline itself; a discipline's developmental history to which we should add the contribution of Farrer (Matless 1991; French 1994; Younghusband 1920; Peet and Thrift 1989, 203; Gilbert 1965).

In Messner's defence, however, the overall impact of the MMM is that the most admired mountains are here, as the Dolomite peaks or Mount Fuji were for Farrer, transformed into 'enormous pilgrims in the road of salvation' (Farrer 1908, 74). I cannot forbear from relating the narratives of both Messner and Farrer to the late Peter Fuller, who reminded us of Ruskin's insistence that any intellectual development requires new aesthetic and epistemological approaches to the natural world: 'Once the illusion of the world was the handiwork of God has been jettisoned, then the whole base of aesthetics needs to be re-examined' (Fuller 1997, 25). In both Messner and Farrer's accounts, mountains have the potential to be treated as movable 'types' or 'characters' for staging at home and in the individual's mind a dramatic interplay of different, sometimes competing, memories and icons – symbols, in short, of topographic memory or simply iconic memory.

Messner's narrative strategy both presents and represents his version of 'mountain' landscape, as multifarious and kaleidoscopic it might be in its displayed repertoire. His version re-'invented' the Dolomite landscape by exploiting imagery and symbols that are concurrent with the economic and political issues that motivate their debatable status. His aspirations are not far away from the Victorian endeavours that managed to 'invent' the Alps as a landscape of myth and fabrication, recalling the quasi-imperial status that climbing the Matterhorn or Mont Blanc had acquired during the Golden Age of Mountaineering.

But the main point, nonetheless, remains. It appears that inflections of Englishness at the Messner museums are in fact conspicuous in their absence. His collection contains, indeed, artefacts and first editions of Murray, Ball, and Edwards and so on, but his ethnographic displays are focused on the more Germanized aspects of Alpine history. Messner is proud to own one of the largest collections of art by the acclaimed Victorian artist, Edward Theodore Compton (Fig. 8.16), for example, to be admired at MMM Ortles; and yet Compton was English only by birth, German by naturalization (Brandes and Brandes 2007; Wichmann 1999). We have seen how the Dolomite art of Elijah Walton became to be somewhat derided in his time, perhaps unfairly, and today he is only collected privately, barring the display of the *Monte Civetta* canvass in Birmingham's public art gallery – the gift of Walton himself (Fig. 6.6). For Messner, perhaps Walton's imagery is too closely linked to another storyline, another history, one associated with Italy and promoted by England; its inclusion in the MMM would only dilute Messner's own message of what the Dolomites, in some way representative of all mountain landscapes, mean for him.

Contemporary revivals of Englishness – or the recirculation of the symbols attached to the Dolomites through matrices of topographic memory framed

here as natural beauty, geological significance and cultural history – only really comes about through the localized, small-scale contribution of Italy. The UNESCO documentation, Italian in its production, has amply recognized the English contribution to the Dolomites' elevation to World Heritage List. Larger global narratives, such as the private initiative of Messner, tend to suffocate the reality of the transnational historical heritage of the Dolomites. I provocatively claim that this conflicting, debatable ambiguity has brought Italy to adopt a 'neutral' set of symbols and to rediscover a version of Englishness as a cross-cultural identity that allows 'convenient' relief from a competitive Austrianness or a homogenized mountain heritage that situates the Dolomites more comfortably in the background of St. Moritz than of Venice.

Certainly, the symbols unravelled here say something about a foreign land; but these symbols were peacefully expressed in the Dolomites by the likes of Amelia B. Edwards and Josiah Gilbert. Their enthusiasm for the Dolomites now becomes a conduit for Italy to rediscover something about itself, linked as that identity is to the stratified layers of the Dolomite's cultural landscape. It is to these Victorian commentators that Italy owes at least a small amount of credit for the Dolomites' 'discovery' and 'invention', hitherto veritably 'unknown' and 'untrodden'. In Trentino, for instance, Giuliana Andreotti and Elena Dai Prà, from the University of Trento, have suggested to revitalize the forgotten odeporic legacy represented by Amelia Edwards, Louisa Stuart Costello, Charlott Gordon Hall and of course Josiah Gilbert and George Cheetham Churchil against a valorization of the territory indulging too much towards folkloric re-enactments, agricultural festivals or sportive celebrations of mountaineering. They propose, instead, to explore through didactic itineraries the 'invisible' traces left by English travellers in the area, under the label of a literary and artistic Dolomite heritage (Andreotti 2009; Dai Prà 2003 and 2009; Nievo 1998).² This new turn has brought local historians to discover the traces of

authentic ghosts in the Dolomite territory – such as Anna Powers Pott and Emily Horward-Bury, who built a ‘Villa Inglese’, known also as ‘Castello Sant’Uberto’, in the outskirts of Cortina to participate with the locals in hunting (Colli 2005, 65-67).

Visitors to the Dolomites may certainly admire their beauty, but one wonders if they recognize this English contribution, one which has certainly secured their standing ‘as the most beautiful mountains in the world’. Beneath the veneer of what could now be described as a commercialized skiing mecca, or indeed a fully articulated ‘Messner Country’, pockets of localized Italian resilience are evident, revitalizing the English symbols today that were so readily conveyed in the nineteenth century. Few might attribute the involvement of Josiah Gilbert, for example, in transforming the Dolomites into the epicentre of an educated Petit Tour, driven, as he was, to search out the mountainous backgrounds of Titian’s paintings and his youthful home. Gilbert’s ‘Titian Country’ today is all but forgotten, barring sparse academic attention, but this does not mean that Titian is only catalogued to and qualified by Venice (Mazza 2007).

Published by Dolomiti Turismo and Consorzio Dolomiti Tourist Association, ‘In the Homeland of Titian: Itineraries in the Belluno Area’, Titian’s connection with the Dolomite landscape is once again highlighted. In a similar way to Gilbert’s *Cadore*, the short guide allows modern tourists to explore sites connected with Titian and his legacy, including the places of his childhood, the churches where his paintings once or still hang, and various panoramic view points that allows for advantageous mountain vistas. Following the success of the ‘Titian: The Final Act’, in Belluno from September 2007 to January 2008, the guide responds to a reawakening of ‘the interest of visitors in the art and in the history of the province of Belluno’ (Puppi 2007; Cusinato 2008). The itineraries suggested, ‘Around the Pelmo’ or ‘Home to Titian’, for example, mean that today

‘as well as works by the great Renaissance artist form the Cadore himself, in ancient buildings and churches of Titian’s homeland art lovers and history enthusiasts will find a great deal of interest to visit and landscapes to admire’ (Fig. 9.5).

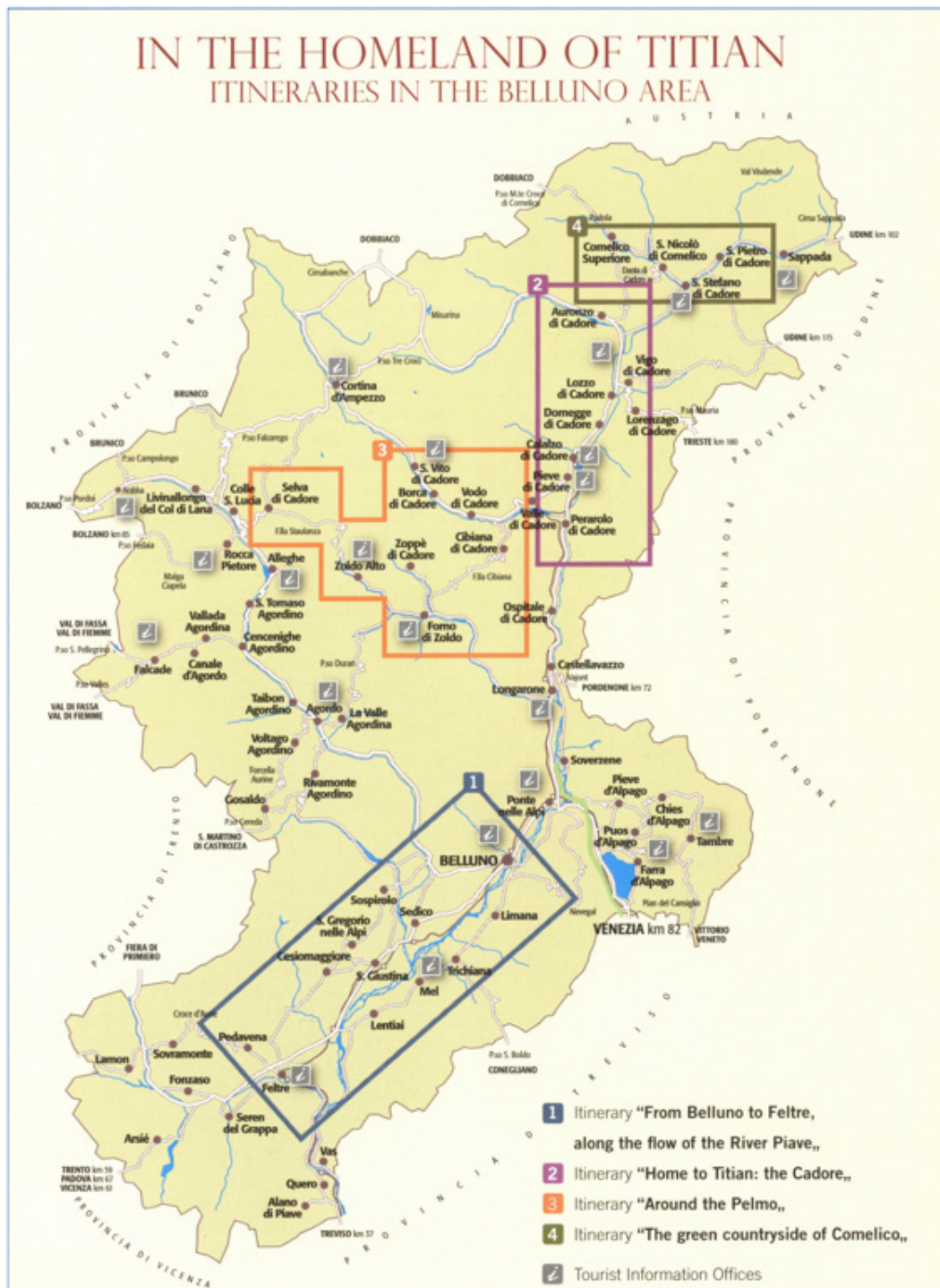


Fig. 9.5 - *In the Homeland of Titian: Itineraries in the Belluno area*, tourist map.

This reawakening of interest in Titian Country, already diffused as the cult of Titian in the Victorian Period, speaks for a more general Italian interest in the English legacy in the Dolomites (see Chapter 5). A recent article in the Italian newspaper, *La Repubblica*, discusses the significance of Gilbert and Churchill's 1864 impact for understanding the Dolomites today as well as their nomenclature; the scientist and artist who were responsible for 'naming it forever', despite vain attempts by the Viennese palaeontologist Rudolf Hoernes to reject the name offered by them (Veronese 2014).

This becomes a vicarious and subtle exploitation of English heritage, an insertion on the part of Italy, which acts to remedy, again, in a tempered and unobtrusive way, the overpowering affect of global heritage labels and the continuation of Austrian promotion of the landscape as an inflection of a Tyrolean *Heimat* (see Chapter 8). A recent trend similarly sees small Dolomite publishing houses, such as Nuovi Sentieri in Belluno, for example, publish translations in Italian of several of the primary texts used here, including Edwards' 1872 *Untrodden Peaks as Cime inviolate e valli sconosciute: Vagabondaggi di mezza estate nelle Dolomiti 1872*, published by Bepi Pellegrinon (Edwards 1991); interestingly, these modern translations are not available in German. Presumably this satisfies a local demand for those interested in the first accounts, originally written in English, of Dolomite experiences. As another, more invigorating reminder of Edwards' memory and legacy in the Dolomites, complementing this modern revival printed in the Italian language, on the 26th of August 2001, a historic re-enactment of her and Lucy Renshaw's journey took place between Primiero and San Martino di Castrozza, with characters in costume (Balzani 2002, 151); for the occasion Samoggia's translation of Edwards' chapter on this route was printed separately and distributed as *Cime inviolate valli sconosciute: il viaggio da Agordo a Primiero di Amelia B. Edwards (1872)* (Edwards 2001). The event was organized

by the Azienda per il Turismo di Fiera di Primiero, the local tourist agency. All this is valorized by significant Italian research into the part played by English Dolomite enthusiasts that has been published in the last thirty years, often focusing on one specific mountain such as the Pelmo or Civetta (Angelini 2006; 2002; 1977; 1987; Angelini and Somnavilla 1983; 2002; Colli 2005; Gasparetto 2012). Articles celebrating the English pioneers of the Dolomites are featured regularly in tourist-oriented alpine magazines such as *Montagne*, but they appear only appear sporadically in German equivalents.

It is without doubt that nineteenth-century English travellers in the Dolomites would barely recognize the main thoroughfare of Cortina d'Ampezzo today. For the likes Edwards, Gilbert, or Frances Elliot, the village was little known to English tourists, made-up of only 500 inhabitants and surrounded by 'unknown mountains'. It was a 'humble' place then, where 'luxuries, of course' were 'out of the question' (Edwards 1873, 75). Dominated only by two hotels – the Stella d'Oro and Aquila Nera – only 236 visitors were recorded being at the 'Italian-speaking frotier' of Cortina in 1869, then a place of business for 'busy traffic in timber and flour between Tyrol and Italy', but not for tourists (Gilbert and Churchill 1864, 156). The epoch of mountaineering, but also tourism, had yet to arrive in Cortina even then: 'Let it be observed', said Gilbert and Churchill somewhat naïvely, 'that the Dolomites are not particularly suitable for climbers' (*ibid.*, xviii).

The fashion for the Dolomites, initiated by these English enthusiasts and lovers of landscape (Tuan 1990), changed their landscape forever. Once isolated and unknown, this 'new playground' was to become so coveted that places like Cortina would have an Anglican church built to accommodate the mass of English mountaineers and tourists that would flock to the Dolomites as early as in the 1910s (Davidson 1912, 105). But this represented very little of what Cortina would come to mean at the global level; by 1956, a century after John

Ball climbed the Pelmo for the first time, such was the draw of Cortina and the Dolomites that they would host the Winter Olympics. Modern-day mountaineers can just as easily spend a day skiing in the winter months as they can in browsing the boutique shops of Cortina in summer, perhaps buying an original Picasso from a Venetian gallery with an outpost there: the Dolomites remain a zone of prestige, established as they were, as a privileged destination just over a century ago.

The landscape imagery attached to the Dolomites in the nineteenth century owes a great deal to the Victorians who went there. The abstract metaphors of Englishness this imagery allowed them, as Simon Schama puts it, to become 'more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery' itself (Schama 1995, 61). Located in the interstitial space between the blurred concepts of the purely representational and the actual experience of embodied landscape, this heritage is today figuratively lost in the clouds. Ruskin was right; it is difficult to describe and represent a mountain landscape comprehensively. The Dolomites are no less vulnerable to those efforts that seek completeness because their anatomy, like the Mont Blanc for Ruskin, only becomes understandable by accepting imperfection or (Turnerian) mystery. We recall when Ruskin states 'nothing is ever seen perfectly, but only by fragments, and under various conditions of obscurity' (Ruskin 1903, 15: 120). But this English heritage is not lost completely, nor is it obscured beyond recognition by competing identities and nationalisms or, indeed, universal agendas. The UNESCO and local Italian initiatives have recognized the English aesthetic, scientific and mountaineering dimensions that have gone into the cultural making of the Dolomites as a whole, but complex, entity.

These symbols, today, are usefully employed, not as a critique of world heritage status and the advantages that this brings, but, instead, as a starting point; one for us to move away from simplistic notions of heritage in order to

Epilogue: Dolomite (English) Heritage

pursue an outlook that is more dynamic and multi-layered. By accommodating and problematizing both the lived and aesthetic iconographies of Englishness in the Dolomite Mountains, the Italian appropriation, subtle exploitation, even, of these symbols are today recirculated, it seems, as an antidote to traditional understandings of homogenous global heritage, and a singular underpinning of identity. This allows us to question the supremacy of tangible traditions over other more 'hidden' manifestations of heritage as well as the notion that the heritage of a particular landscape is inevitably confined to its territory, challenging the very idea of Nation.

Notes

¹ Berlusconi's spot can be viewed on YouTube and various other online platforms (web search: "Magica Italia"). The original text reads as follows: "Questa che vedi è la tua Italia. Un Paese unico, fatto di cielo, di sole e di mare, ma anche di storia, di cultura e di arte. È un Paese straordinario, che devi ancora scoprire. Impiega le tue vacanze per conoscere meglio l'Italia. La tua magica Italia", published on the Italian Government official website (<http://www.governo.it/>).

² The series of highly informative *Tesi di Laurea* (the equivalent of our M.A. Dissertations) quoted throughout this work (Zegler 1995; Irsara 2001; Balzani 2002) are witnesses of the commitment the University of Trento English Department to explore and revitalize the repertoire of Victorian travellers in the Dolomites.



APPENDIX

The UNESCO Dolomites

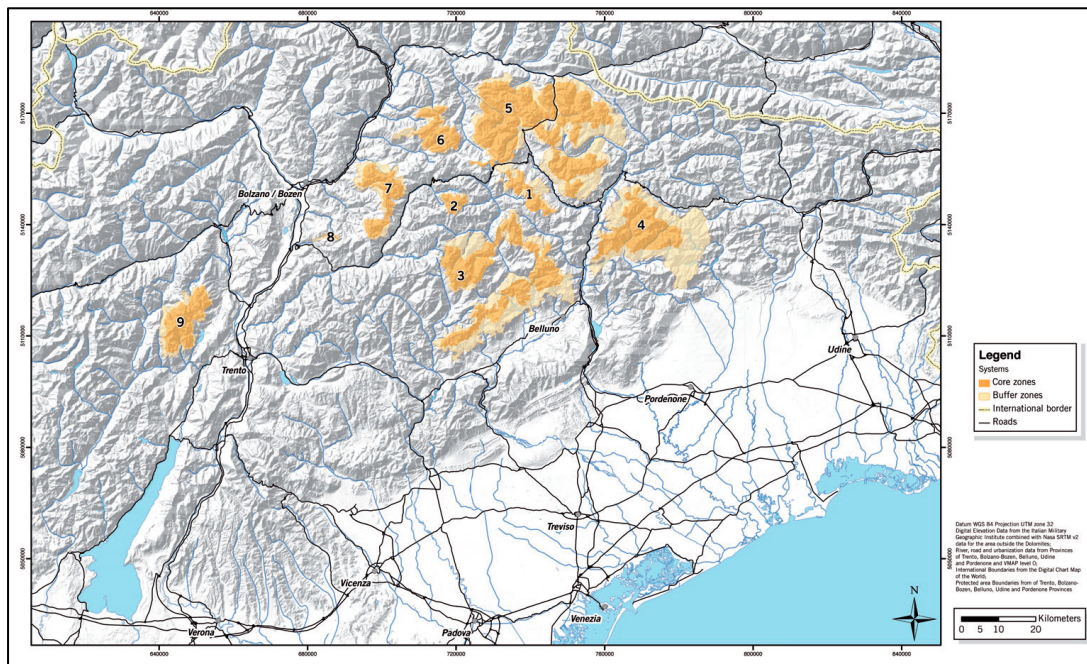


Fig. 10.1 - The geographical distribution of the 9 UNESCO areas, divided into core and buffer zones (Gianolla 2008, 12-13).

The Dolomites are nominated as a UNESCO serial property. They appear as an organic whole even though they have a complex structure both from the geographical/landscape (criterion VII) and the geological/geomorphological (criterion VIII) point of view. The different systems make up a composition of evidence and landscape peculiarities, interlinked by a network of genetic and aesthetic relationships. The property extend over a wide area on the northeastern part of Italy: to the north is limited by the Pusteria Valley/Pustertal, descending east, by the Sesto Valley/Sextnertal; eastward by the upper part of the Tagliamento river, then down through the Tramontina

Appendix: The UNESCO Dolomites

Valley, to the west into the intermediated part of the Cellina Valley; to the south by the Piave valley, the borders then follow the Cismon Valley, the Travignolo Valley and the Avisio Valley and then reach the Adige Valley. The most western part is limited by the Rendena Valley and Val Meledrio, then, through the Sole Valley, it follows the Adige Valley and finally by the Isarco Valley.

Pelmo – Nuvolau

The core zone of the first UNESCO area or ‘system’ stretched along a NW-SE direction (Fig. 10.2); it’s bounded to the east by the Boite Valley, to the southwest by the highest part of the Zoldo Valley and by the Fiorentina Valley, to the west-north west by the Codalunga River, to the north by the Falzarego Valley. The mountainous groups comprise the Monte Pelmo and Pelmetto, the Formin-Rocchette-Croda da Lago group, the Monte Cenera group and the Monte Nuvolau group. The area displays one of the most typical Dolomite landscape.

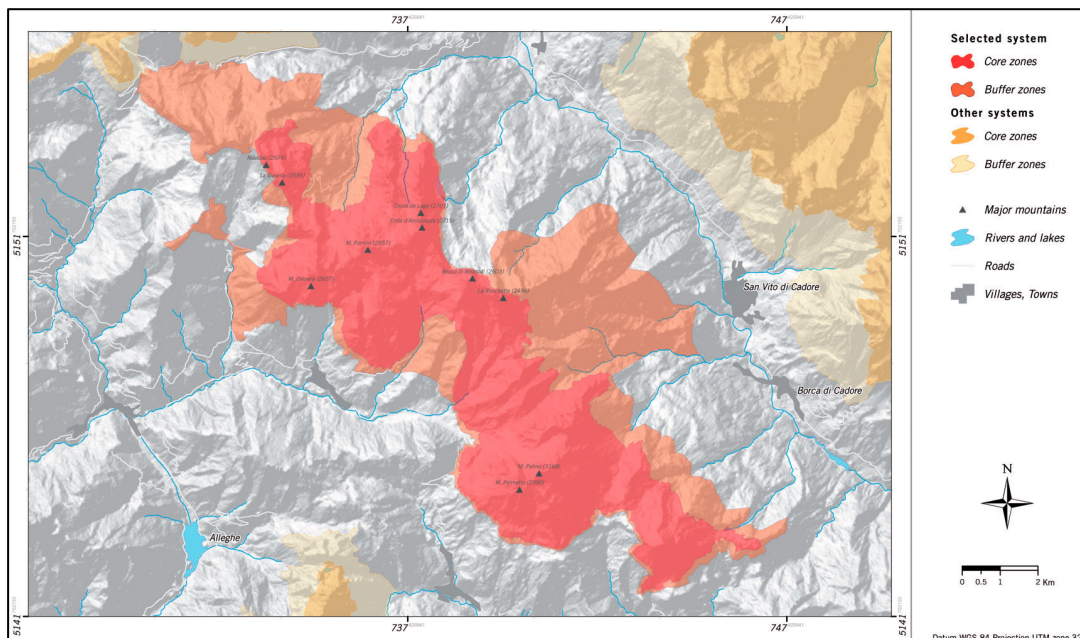


Fig. 10.2 - UNESCO System 1 – Pelmo-Nuvolau (Gianolla 2008, 108).



Fig. 10.3 - Croda da Lago and Pelmo, Photographer: Dell'Agnola, 2004.



Fig. 10.4 - Nuvolau and Pelmo, Photographer: Dell'Agnola, 2003.

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Fig. 10.5 - Lastoi del Formin and Croda da Lago, Photographer: Dell'Agnola, 2004.



Fig. 10.6 - Pelmo, Photographer: Dell'Agnola, 2002.

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Marmolada

The Marmolada Group rises up almost at the centre of the Dolomites (attachment 2.5). It is the highest summit of the Dolomites and it possesses some of the most extended glacier; from here the name of 'The Queen of the Dolomites'. It reaches a maximum height of 3,343 meters with Punta Penia, and it covers an area of approx. 4.6 km². To the north, the valleys of the Cordevole Torrent and the Avisio River, which join through the Passo Pordoi (2,239 m), isolate it from the Sella Group. The Cordevole River valley closes the group to the east; to the south it is closed by the Biois Torrent, which has left tributaries that drain the southern side of the massif, and the San Pellegrino Brook, linking it to the Passo di San Pellegrino (1,919 m). To the west the Marmolada Group continues, without interruption, with the Cima di Costabella (2,762 m), the Monzoni Group (Ricoletta, 2,647 m) and Monte Vallaccia (2,637 m) through to the Avisio Torrent. The Marmolada Group can be divided in two parts. The southern part extends to the south of the San Nicolò Valley, bordered off by the Passo Ombretta and Pettorina Valley.

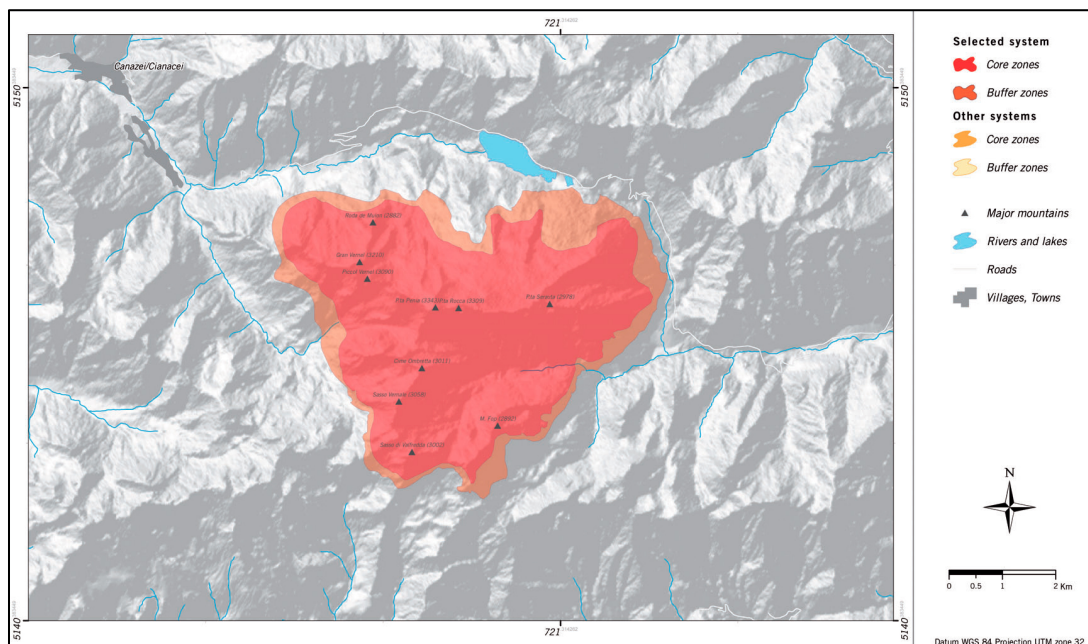


Fig. 10.7 - UNESCO System 2 – Marmolada (Gianolla 2008, 122)



Fig. 10.8 - Southern face of Marmolada in 'Gran Vernel', Photographer: Camerano, 2003.



Fig. 10.9 - Marmolada, Photographer: Dell'Agnola, 2003.



Fig. 10.10 - Marmolada Glacier from Lagazuoi, Photographer: Gianolla, 2002.



Fig. 10.11 - Marmolada South Wall, Photographer: Fiamoi, 2007.

Appendix: The UNESCO Dolomites

Pale di San Martino and San Lucano, Dolomiti Bellunesi, Vette Feltrine

The core zone has a horseshoe shape and extends widely in a SW-NE direction, it's bounded to the south-east by the Piave Valley, to the west by the Cismon Valley, to the north by the Valley of Trivignolo, Valley of Biois and Agordina Valley, and to the north-east by the Valley of Maè (Zoldana Valley). It includes distinct mountain areas: from south to north we meet the Vette Feltrine-Cimonega-Erera Brendol, Monti del Sole and Schiara Talvena, the Mt. Civetta and the Pale di S. Martino and S. Lucano. The first area lies on SW-NE direction and from west to east it includes the Vette Feltrine whose main peaks are Mt. Vallazza (2,167 m), Mt. Pavione (2,335 m), Cima Dodici (2,265 m), La Pietena (2,195 m), Mt. Ramezza (2,250 m) and Sasso di Scarnia (2,226 m). Eastward there are the two main chains, Cimonega to the north and Piani Eterni to the south, surrounding the plane of Erera-Brendol. The most important peaks here are: Sas de Mura (2,547 m), Piz di Sagron (2,486 m), Piz de Mez (2,440 m) and Monte Agnellezze.

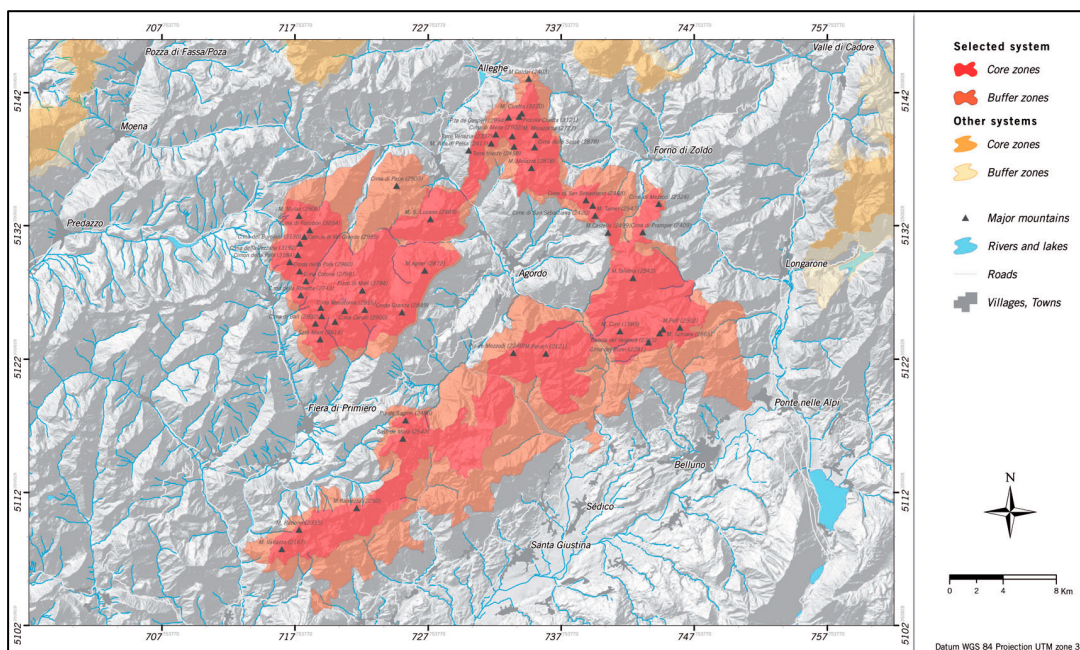


Fig. 10.12 - UNESCO System 3 – Pale di San Martino (Gianolla 2008, 150)



Fig. 10.13 - Pale di San Martino, Photographer: Trentino S.p.A, 2003.



Fig. 10.14 - Pale di San Martino seen from Passo Rolle, Photographer: Visciani, 1999.



Fig. 10.15 - Schiara-Pelf, Photographer: Dell'Agnola, 2003.



Fig. 10.16 - Civetta, Photographer: Visciani, 2003.

Dolomiti Friulane/Dolomitis Furlanis e d'Oltre Piave

The overall surface area is 470 km² (of which 398 in the Province di Udine and Pordenone and 72 in that of Belluno) and it is enclosed between the Piave, the upper Tagliamento, the Val Tramontina and the intermediate part of the Val Cellina. From the hydrographical point of view the nucleus of the area is constituted by the head of the Cellina Torrent with its two affluents Cimoliana and Settimana. The northern part refers to small affluents on the hydrographic right hand side of the Tagliamento and to the west, the Piave River. The main groups from north to south are the Cridola (2581 m), Monfalconi (Cima Monfalcon 2548 m), the Spalti di Toro (Cadin di Toro 2386 m) and Duranno-Cima Preti (2706 m).

Appendix: The UNESCO Dolomites

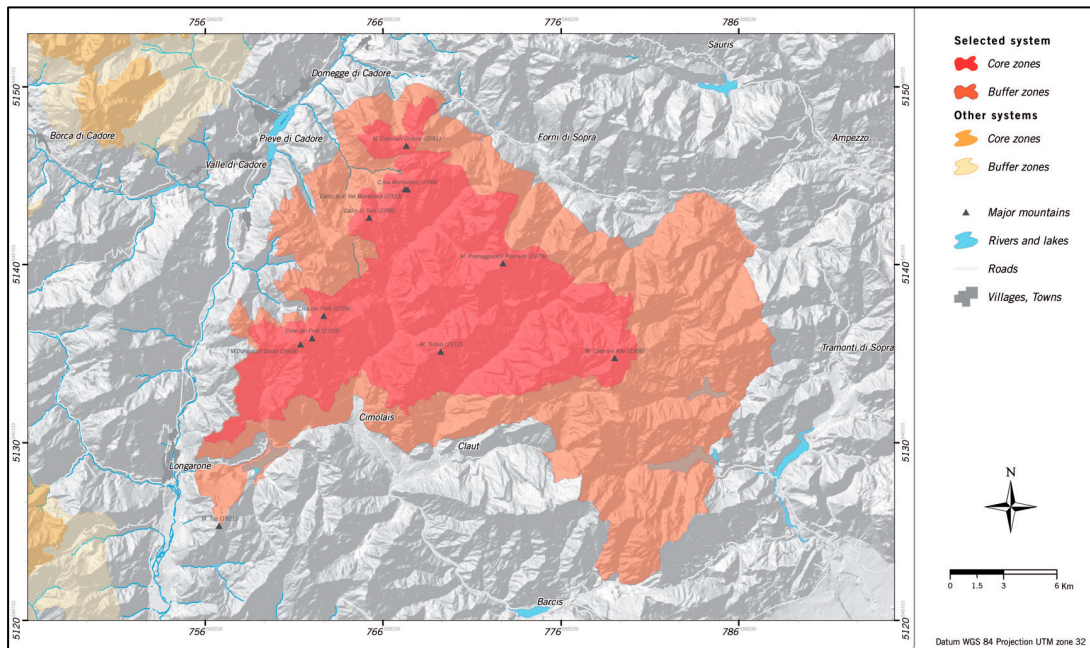


Fig. 10.17 - UNESCO System 4 – Dolomiti Friulane e d'Oltre Piave (Gianolla 2008, 166)



Fig. 10.18 - Val Montanaia, Photographer: Ciol, 2004.



Fig. 10.19 - Croda Cimolaiana, Photographer: Ciol, 2006.



Fig. 10.20 - Cima dei Preti, Photographer: Ciol, 2004.



Fig. 10.21 - Campanile di Val Montanaia, Photographer: Valt, 2006.

Dolomiti Settentrionali / Nördliche Dolomiten, Dolomiti Cadorine, Sett Sass

This core zone, which includes four major areas the Sesto/Sextner Dolomites – Cadini area, the Braies/Prags - Fanes/Sennes and Tofane area and the Mt. Cristallo area and the Cadorine Dolomites is delimited to the north by the Val Pusteria/Pustertal and the Sesto Valley, by the Val Badia/Gadertal to the west and it extends south along the Valley of S. Cassiano to Passo Falzarego and to the NW portion of the town of Cortina D’Ampezzo, to the east by the Padola torrent, to the southeast by the Piave Valley and to the southwest by the Boite Valley.

Appendix: The UNESCO Dolomites

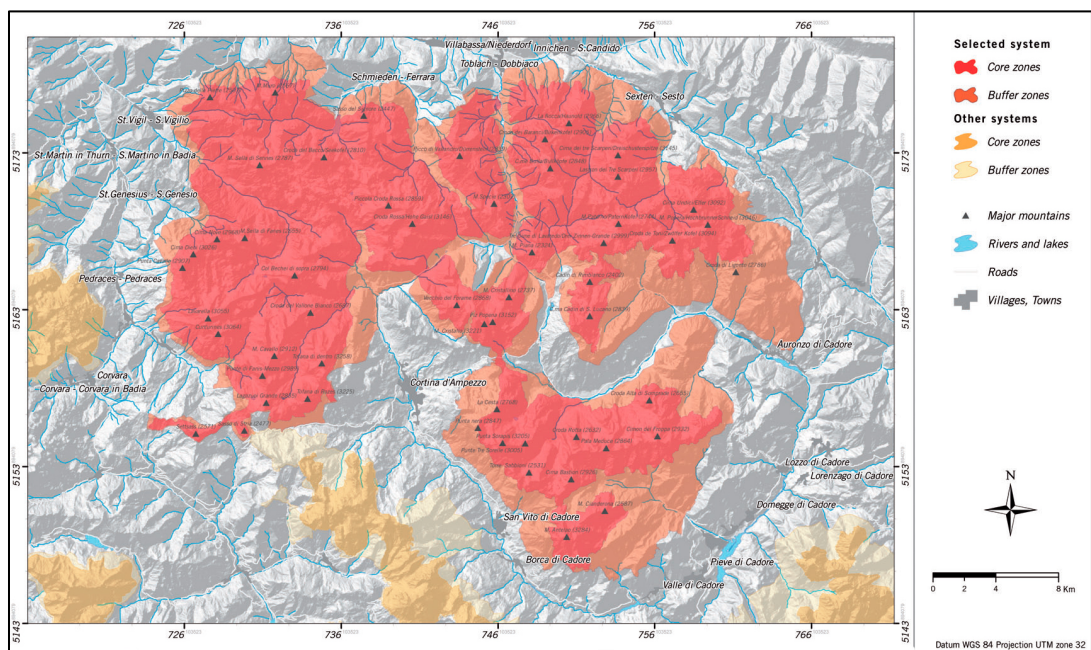


Fig. 10.22 - UNESCO System 5 – Dolomiti Settentrionali (Gianolla 2008, 190)



Fig. 10.23 - Marmarole, Photographer: Fiamoi, 2004.



Fig. 10.24 - Cristallo, Photographer: Dell'Agnola, 2001.



Fig. 10.25 - Fanes, Photographer: Panizza, 1999.



Fig. 10.26 - Tofana di Rozes, Photographer: Fiamoi, 2004.

Puez-Odle / Puez-Geisler / Pöz Odles

This area extends over 10.200 hectares of surface area in the Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, and it can be defined the “geological worksite of the Dolomites”. Here there are all the sedimentary formations and rock types, the tectonic movements and the erosive manifestations, typical of the western Dolomites. The entire area is already protected as a Natural Park and it includes the last north western mountain bastions of the Dolomites today still saved from mass tourism. At the southern edge the Gardena Valley where we find the towns of Ortisei/St. Ulrich/Urtijëi, Santa Cristina/St. Christina, Selva/Wolkenstein; beyond Passo Gardena/ Grödnerjoch/Jeuf de Frea (2115 m) we enter the upper Val Badia/Gadertal, where the towns of Corvara, Badia/Abtei and S. Martino in Badia/St. Martin in Thurn delimit the eastern edge of this sector.

Appendix: The UNESCO Dolomites

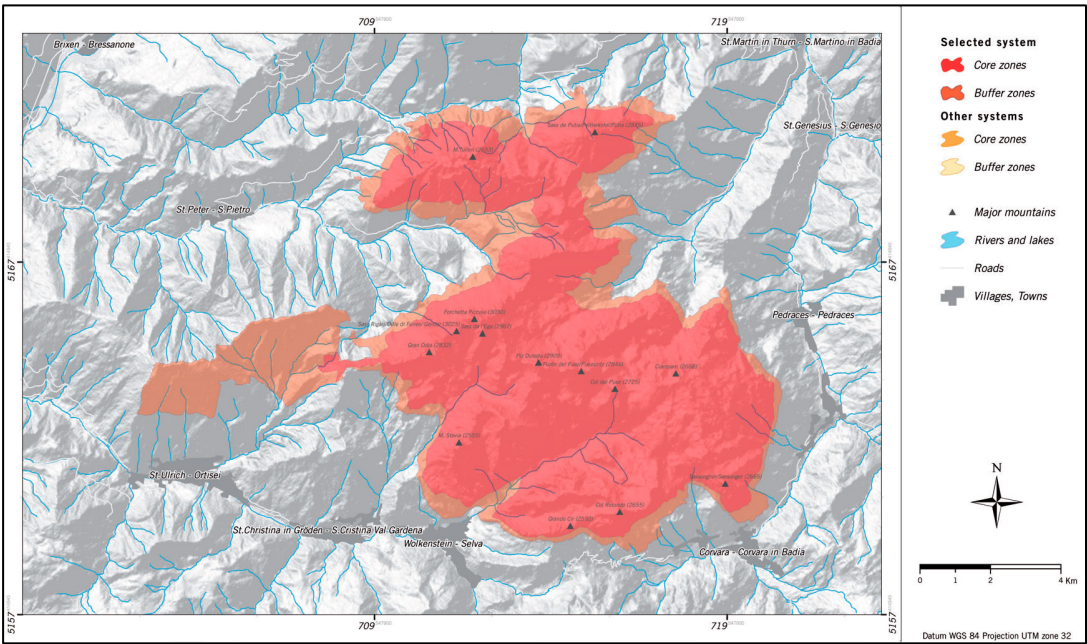


Fig. 10.27 - UNESCO System 6 – Puez-Odle (Gianolla 2008, 202)



Fig. 10.28 - Odle, Photographer: Tappeiner, 2003.



Fig. 10.29 - Torri del Cir, Photographer: Ufficio Parchi Naturali, 2004.



Fig. 10.30 - Odle, Photographer: Dall'Agnola, 2004.



Fig. 10.31 - Gardenaccia, Photographer: Ufficio Parchi Naturali, 2002.

Sciliar-Catinaccio / Schlern-Rosengarten, Latemar

This important core can be separated in two distinct bodies: the Sciliar/Schlern - Catinaccio/Rosengarten and the Latemar. The first group is located on the edge of the Western Dolomites and, as can be gathered by the name, is composed of two large massifs: the Sciliar/Schlern, in the Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, and the Catinaccio/Rosengarten, in the Provincia Autonoma di Trento (attachment 2.12). In a more southern position is placed the Latemar.

Appendix: The UNESCO Dolomites

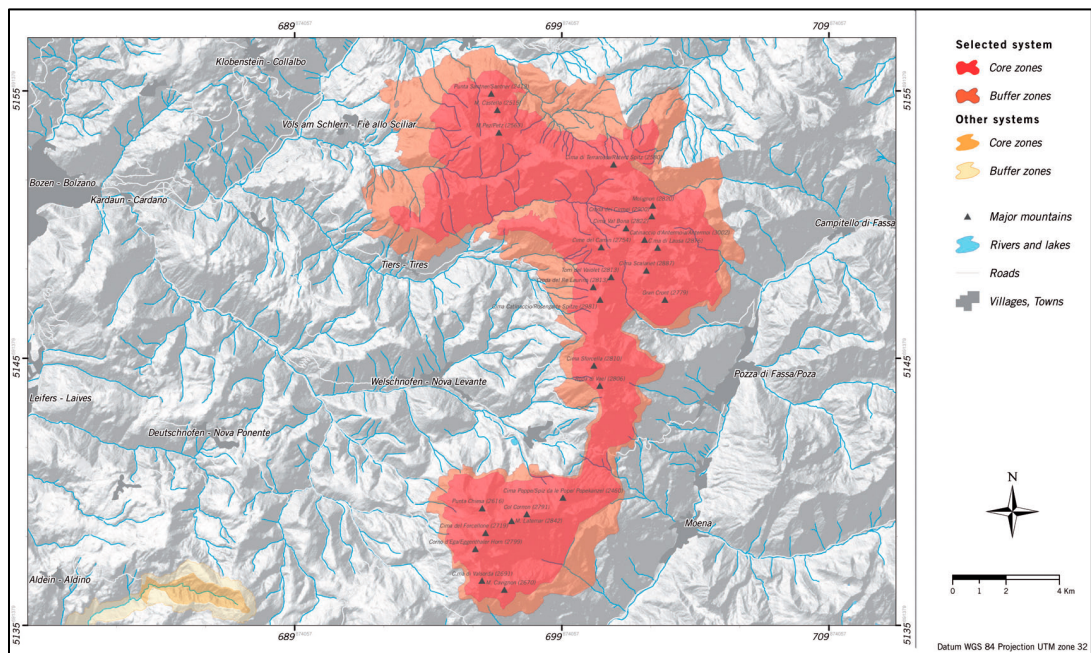


Fig. 10.32 - UNESCO System 7 – Sciliar-Catinaccio, Latemar (Gianolla 2008, 222)

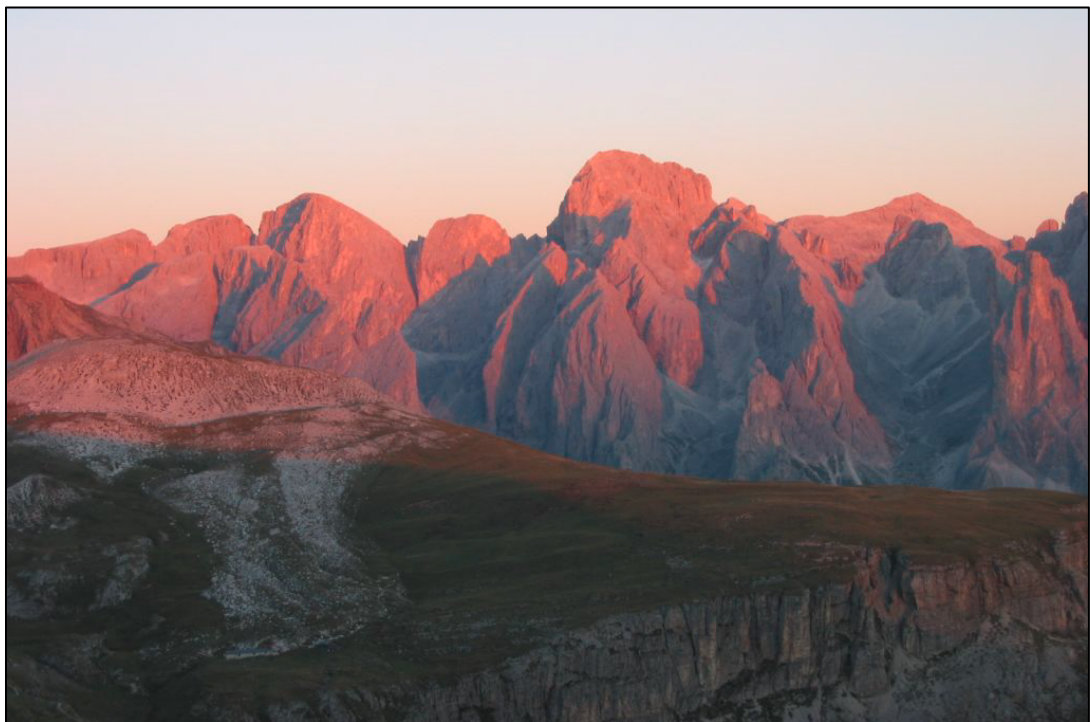


Fig. 10.33 - Northern Side of Catinaccio/Rosengarten, Photographer: Ufficio Parchi Naturali, 2006.



Fig. 10.34 - Sciliar/Schlern, Photographer: Ufficio Parchi Naturali, 2000.



Fig. 10.35 - Sciliar/Schlern, Photographer: Tappeiner, 2005.

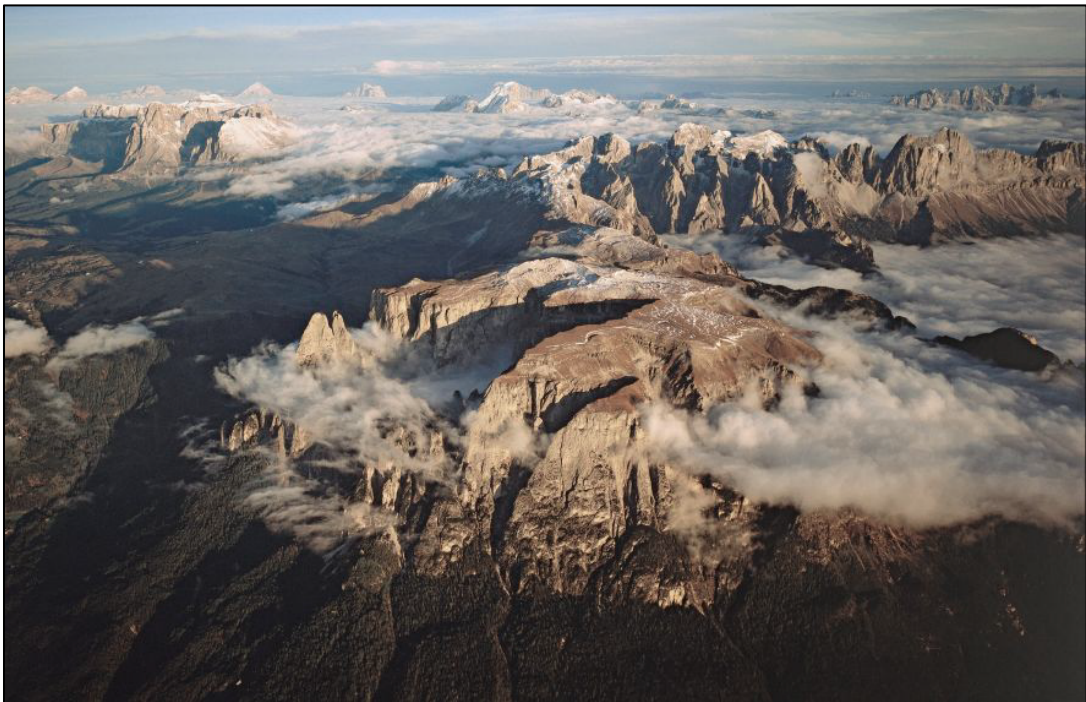


Fig. 10.36 - Sciliar/Schlern and Catinaccio/Rosengarten, Photographer: Tappeiner, 2004.

Rio delle Foglie / Bletterbach

The area of Rio delle Foglie/Bletterbach is located in the Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano and it's a gorge cut by the stream Rio delle Foglie/Bletterbach (attachment 2.12). This narrow canyon is roughly limited to the northwest by the village of Aldino/Aldein, to the north by Monte Pausabella, towards the southeast by Passo di Oclini/Jochgrimm (1,989 m), towards south-southwest by Redagno/Radein and Monte Colle, and towards the west by the village of Olmi. The whole area is characterized by modest elevations compared to other Dolomitic areas. The only notable peak is Corno Bianco/Weisshorn, which is located in the eastern-most section and has an elevation of 2,317 m.

Appendix: The UNESCO Dolomites

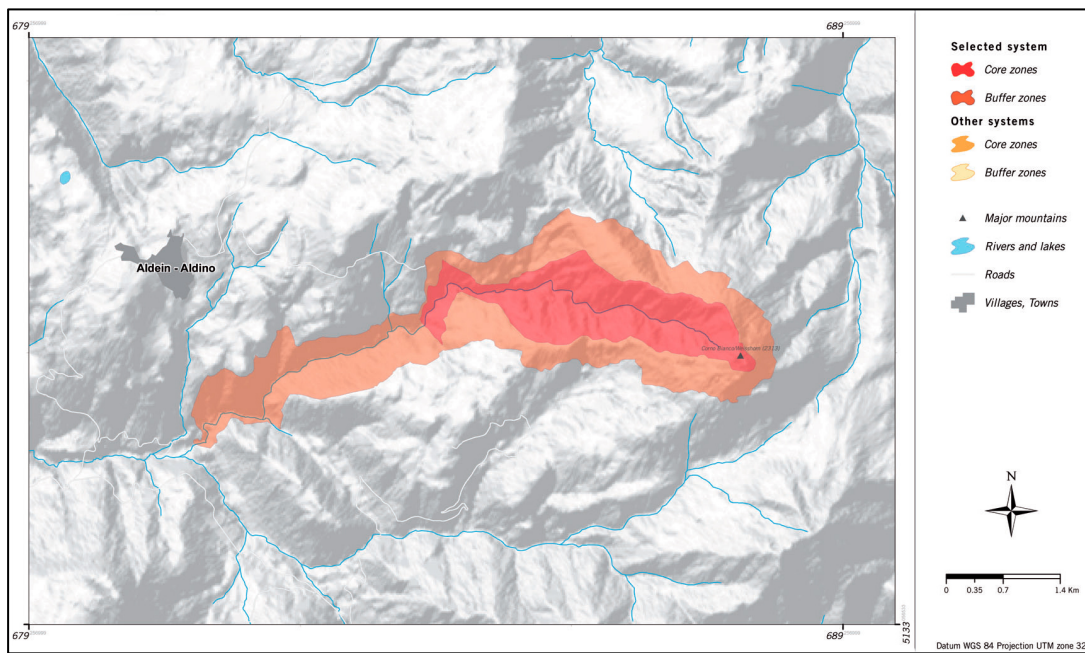


Fig. 10.37 - UNESCO System 8 – Rio delle Foglie (Gianolla 2008, 234)

Dolomiti di Brenta

The Group of the Dolomiti di Brenta, situated in the western of the Trento Province, is delimited to the west from the line of the Giudicarie that together with the Insubrica line defines the NW limit of the Dolomitic region. This Group is roughly 42 km long, 15 km across and arranged transversally from north-east to south-west, covering an area of around 92 km².

Appendix: The UNESCO Dolomites

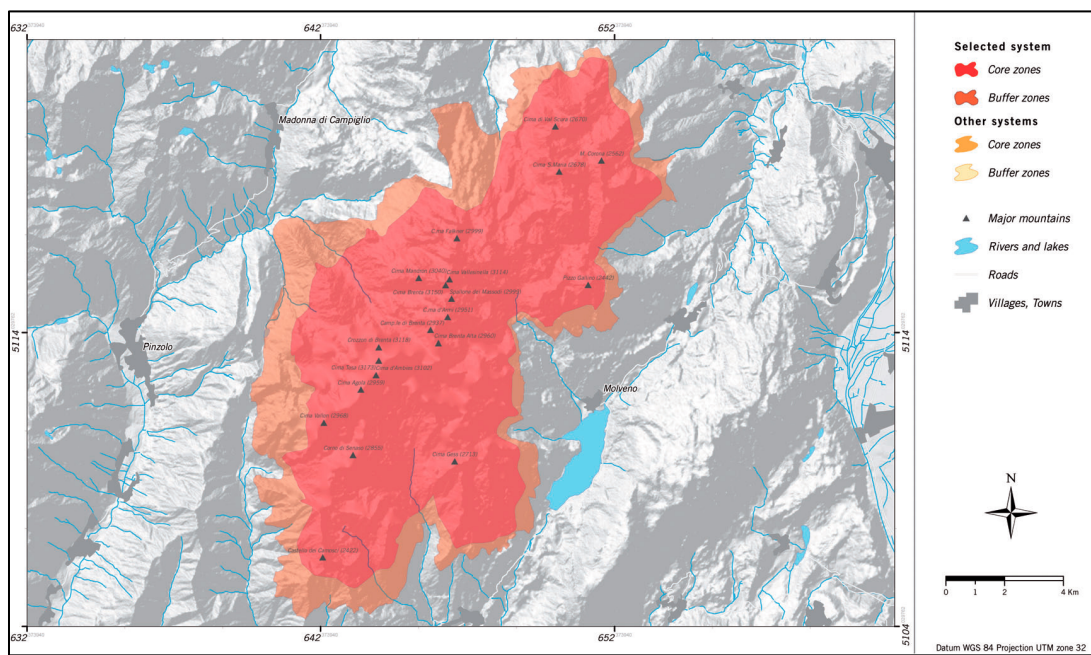


Fig. 10.38 - UNESCO System 9 – Dolomiti di Brenta (Gianolla 2008, 254)

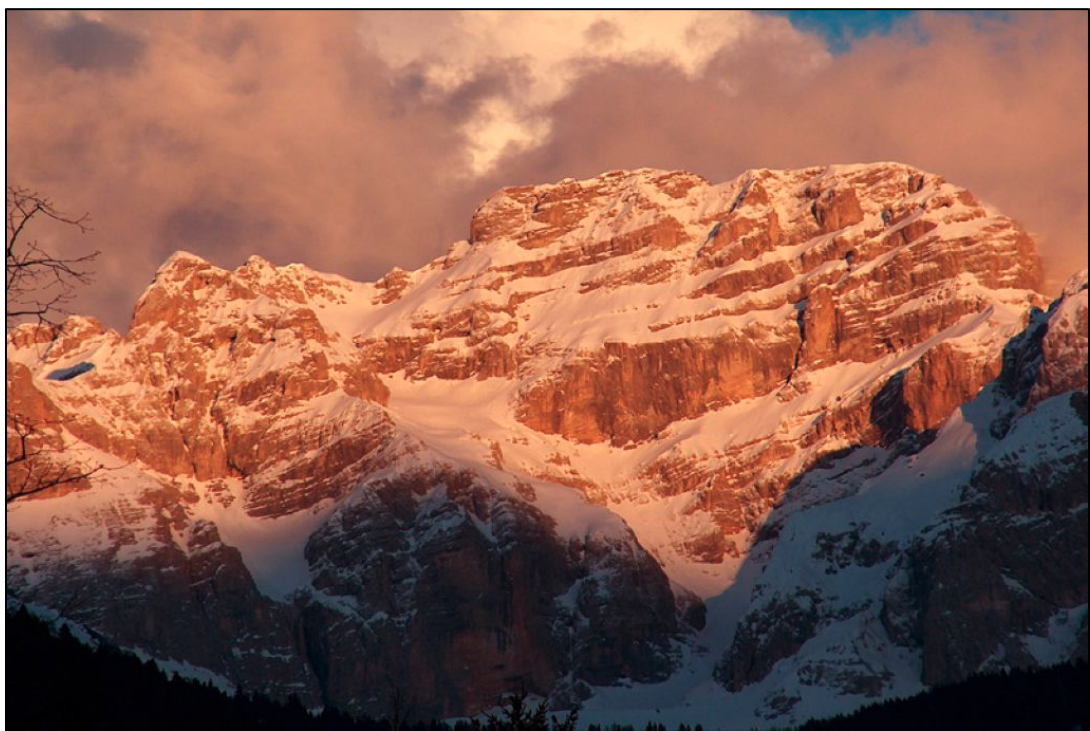


Fig. 10.39 - Brenta Group, Photographer: Benedetti, 2002.

Appendix: The UNESCO Dolomites



Fig. 10.40 - Val Rendena, Adamello-Brenta Nature Park, Lake Nero, Photographer: Zotta, 2002.



Fig. 10.41 - Brenta Group, Photographer: Benedetti, 2000.



Fig. 10.42 - Brenta Group, Photographer: Zotta, 2004.



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